

# *The Sovable Meddler*



*Leona Dalrymple*

H. D. Crane





# The Lovable Meddler



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*Leddy Rose*

# The Lovable Meddler

By  
Leona Dalrymple  
Author of *Diane of the Green Van*



Illustrations by  
*Grant Tyson Reynard*

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*The Lovable Meddler*

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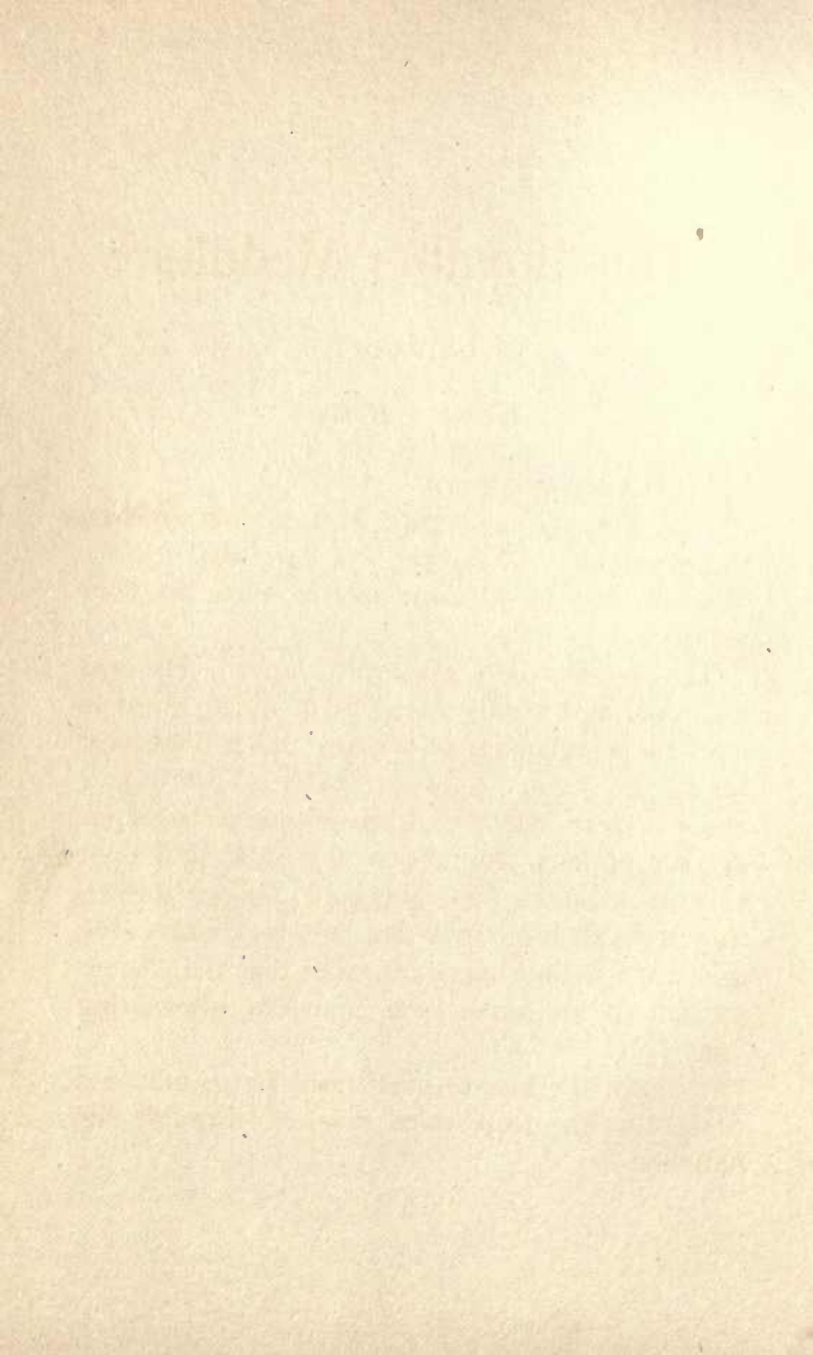
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Maddened by the charm of her, Larry  
stormed and pleaded . . . As Rose  
listened, her face grew very white and her  
eyes blazed in an agony of pleading. *Page* 108

Bob stirred uneasily and the girl dropped to  
her knees by the side of the couch with a  
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dear," she said bravely, "I have been a  
very great fool." . . . . *Page* 246

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# The Lovable Meddler

## Chapter 1

### *"Hame o' Roses"*

THE telephone rang.

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Glenmuir from the veranda. "You can be sure that's Rose Weston, too busy, as usual, to come to your party —"

The Doctor laid aside his paper. He was a shrewd and kindly faced Scot, much given to marked peculiarities of diction and a disrespect for his final g's. A heavy thatch of white hair above a clear, ruddy skin made him picturesque. A pair of keen, humorous blue eyes told their tale of vitality. Set beneath shaggy brows, they twinkled or shot fire in quick succession and warned the chance offender that the electric current of his humor was a swiftly alternating one.

"Leave the lass to me!" said he grimly and presently his deep voice boomed through the hallway.

“Dinna say ye are not comin’ to my rose-party, lass! . . . What! None of ye comin’? Busy, eh? . . . Leddy Rose, I’m losin’ patience with ye. Ye’re that busy and clannish, all of ye, that ye might live on t’other side of the world for all we ever see or hear of ye. And ye haven’t been to see my Jeannie for months and months! . . . Dinna ye ever rest a bit? . . . Mark ye, lass, I’m still the family doctor and I can fix up a verra fine case and pack ye off to bed to rest for a month if I have a mind to! . . . Dinna fail me, Rose, lass,” he wheedled, a caress in his voice. “’Tis no rose-party at all without the Leddy Rose herself. . . . Guid, that’s a verra fair compromise. Dinna fail me.” He hung up the receiver, his face radiant.

“She’ll come for a while — early,” he told his wife and daughter. “Trust your artful old father, Jeannie, that she winna get away. Well, Jamie, my lad, what’s on your mind, eh?”

James, the Scotch gardener, halted at the foot of the veranda steps, pulling his cap from a grizzled thicket of hair.

“I would have ye all see the roses with the sunset light upon them!” he exclaimed eagerly in accordance with a cherished custom on the Doctor’s party night. “It’s a sight for sair

e'en. I didna think that any year could be so guid for the flowers."

Now Jamie's yearly announcement rarely varied. Always it occurred when the famous Glenmuir roses attained the climax of their loveliness, the celebration of which had inaugurated the Doctor's yearly rose-party. Always they were a sight for "sair e'en" and always to the Doctor's delight Jamie did not think that any year could be so "guid for the flowers." Always too must the Doctor pretend ignorance of the object of Jamie's appearance until he had it from Jamie's own lips. It was a time of unalloyed delight to all the inmates of the "Hame o' Roses" save Flora, Jamie's strict and pious wife, for most of the year Jamie too was pious, but he swore most unconcernedly when the rose-bugs came.

"The deil's in 'em!" he confided presently to the Doctor, leading the way through the wilderness of roses. "Ye dinna ken what a crack-brained lot they all be, a-nibblin' away at the leaves like so many niffy-naffy sheep." Jamie persisted in hinting that he recognized certain notorious characters among the rose-bugs. "That one, sir, is a deil." He flipped the bandit into space with a muttered imprecation and the Doctor twinkled. For to Jamie,

torn by conflicting emotions, all the vices of the universe centered in the rose-bug, yet he loathed the killing of any living thing.

"Whist, Jamie, my lad, softly, softly!" warned the Doctor. "Flora may hear ye." Jamie eyed the nearest window in dismay and moved on, proudly exhibiting his roses.

"There's no gainsayin' it," vouched the Doctor with a sudden glow about his heart; "'tis a bonny sight." He glanced at the long, low, old-fashioned house set in its green wealth of spreading lawns and fine old elms. Cool depths of waving shadow found a colorful foil in the profusion of roses which had led the Doctor to christen his home in the dialect he loved — "Hame o' Roses." A rambling extension at the side bore a weather-beaten disclosure of the Doctor's calling in the words: "Roderick Glenmuir, M. D."

"Guid faith, Agnes, (he called it Ogues) I love it all!" And wheeling at the sound of footsteps, the Doctor waved to a young man striding briskly up the driveway.

"Ah, Larry, lad," he called, "just come see the bonny roses. With the glowin' sunset light upon them, ye'll find no prettier sight anywhere."

The visitor approached, smiling, his eyes quite

as keen and blue and humorous as the Doctor's own.

"Glorious!" he agreed, halting beside the trio, hat in hand, "and Cousin Jean with this sunset light upon her hair looks like a sun goddess inspecting her work."

The Doctor's eyes wandered with warm affection over the slim, white-gowned figure among the roses. Touched with the lingering brightness of the westering sun, the girl's bronze wealth of hair and hazel eyes made him think somehow of Scottish cairngorm.

"There, Agnes," he exclaimed in delight, "have I not often said that the lass's hair and eyes and her nature too are woven of strands of sunlight? Larry, lad, ye have a way of puttin' things that fair pleases me. Bob did not come, eh?"

"Bob," explained his nephew, smiling, "is building up a terrific blast of an editorial about the *Auburnia Journal*, and refused to leave it uncompleted. The office boy and one or two printers volunteered to dig him out of his mound of paper at six and send him here."

The Doctor's eyes shot fire.

"I hope the lad will blast it guid!" he declared. "It's a yellow sheet and Reddy Gunnigan is naught but an Irish anarchist

who will publish any bit of slander that comes his way. Nay, Agnes, I will have my say about him. He's all of that and more to boot." And with a much dreaded aptness in quoting Bobbie Burns, he finished triumphantly:

*"With his depths and his shallows, his good and  
his evil  
All in all he's a problem must puzzle the deevil."*

"Mrs. Glenmuir," said Jean mischievously, "your husband has a terrible tongue!"

"Jeannie," grumbled the Doctor, "ye will be saucy with your poor old father. Like your hair and your eyes, ye take that too from your mother."

"Come help me feed Ginger his sugar lumps, Larry," invited Jean, and as the two turned away in the direction of the old barn in its covert of roses, the Doctor sent an authoritative call after them.

"Jeannie," he commanded, "dinna ye forget my old Peggy when ye feed that deil of a Ginger. Agnes," he said to his wife, still following the pair with his eyes, "I just canna help thinkin' to-day how verra much Larry grows like his father. He has the same high color and roguish blue eyes, the same black hair

and easy swing of the shoulders. Ah, brother Larry was a bonny lad too, a bonny lad — ”

And Agnes Glenmuir touched him impulsively upon the arm, her face, so like Jean's save for the whitening halo of her hair, oddly aglow.

“Roderick,” she exclaimed, “Larry looks exactly as you did when I braved Aunt Harriet's wrath and eloped with you so many years ago.”

The Doctor smiled down into her shining eyes.

“Aweel, lass,” he said slyly, “were not his father and I twin brothers? I kenned well enough I could not praise Larry without shinin' myself.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The cathedral clock was still booming six when big Bob Huntley sauntered lazily down Auburnia Avenue to the Hame o' Roses. Like Peggy, the Doctor's mare, Bob rarely hurried.

“It's warm,” he suggested, his eyes sweeping the friendly quartette of faces on the veranda and lingering upon Jean. “Larry, you renegade, why didn't you wait for me?”

“Too much Reddy Gunnigan copy!” countered Larry.

“Did ye blast him guid, Bob?” demanded

the Doctor with an elemental passion for driving straight into the heart of things. Bob nodded serenely.

"Most beautiful piece of abuse I've perpetrated yet," he drawled.

Jean glanced at him in vexed amusement.

"Bob," she exclaimed, "you're incorrigible! How can you speak so amiably of Reddy after he referred to you last night in print as 'that literary mastodon who edits the *Auburnia Press!*'"

Bob threw back his finely moulded head and shook with laughter.

"Well, now," he exclaimed lazily, "that was good, wasn't it? Dad wanted to go down and dynamite the *Journal Building*." But for all the ready good humor of his reply he glanced uneasily at Jean and his outburst a little later to Larry as they strolled along the driveway smoking was frankly despondent.

"I say, Larry," he began; "honestly, now, do you think I'm perhaps a bit too — too strong on philosophy?"

"Mr. Marcus Aurelius Huntley?" reminded Larry. "Well, you did use to drive Quin mad telling him how to control his temper."

Bob sighed. "Do you know, I've been wondering if — if perhaps too much stoic philosophy

isn't emasculating — if genuine anger isn't after all a wholesome touch of humanity — if — ” he broke off, shrugging.

“Philosophized all the anger out of your system?” questioned Larry, puzzled.

“Fact is, Larry,” owned Bob, “that I don't really know what it is to lose my temper any more and I'm sorry I've lost the capacity. Anger always seemed a waste of energy until lately but it's — Oh, well, it's *human!* I fancy most people, particularly women, like a man who's — well, we'll say a bit elemental — not too expert with the emotional emergency brake. What do you think?”

“Stick to your philosophy!” advised Larry warmly.

Bob flung away his cigar and slipped his arm about his friend's shoulder in his lazy, affectionate way.

“Think I could grow a temper, Larry?” he queried good-humoredly. “Complexities have been known to develop from simple beginnings. Certain atoms within me may coalesce and fill this new need in my existence!”

“Has a temper become essential to your existence?”

“Indirectly,” owned Bob, flushing. “Think I can evolve?”

“I hope not!” said Larry sincerely.

Scotch Flora appeared upon the veranda, raw-boned and stern, a mute loyalty to the Doctor lighting up her rugged face. As she silently jerked her gray head toward the dining room, a dinner announcement as eccentric as it was unvarying, the Doctor nodded.

“Verra guid, Flora, lass; the lads have come to dinner. I’ll see to gettin’ them in.” Then he drolly quoted:

*“Some hae meat and canna eat,  
And some wad eat that want it;  
But we hae meat and we can eat,  
And sae the Lord be thankit.”*

## Chapter 2

*Contains cryptic mention of a  
"Peck of Maut"*

AGNES," began the Doctor guilefully as Mrs. Glenmuir joined him on the veranda after dinner, "Jamie has just rounded up some notorious crook among the rose-bugs. I hear him over there by the hedge. I'll just step over and assist with the execution."

Now this was but a lame excuse to wander around in the roses with Jamie, discussing floral genera and slandering the beetles in the fashion of all other June twilights that were not celebrative. Such excursions, however, were invariably fraught with disastrous results to a certain pair of medical knees frequently bent in the search for rose-bugs, and Mrs. Glenmuir had been duly deputized by the Doctor himself to remind him of the respect due his immaculate creases.

"I think," she hinted, "that Jamie is technically qualified to dispose of the prisoner unassisted. Besides, he has infinitely better luck with his knees than you do."

The Doctor subsided with a frank sigh of envy.

"Ah, Agnes, lass," he fretted, "I dinna doubt that when I apply for a harp and a pair of wings, Saint Peter will ask in a terrible voice: 'His name and most characteristic vice?' and the Chief Clerk will call right out, 'Roderick Glenmuir, Baggy Troosers! The old sawbones is just fair notorious because of them.' Just to-day Ben, the tailor, said that no other human being could so balloon his troosers save he had a tumor on each knee!"

From within the Hame came the sound of laughing voices, of a deft cadenza on the piano and Bob's drawl.

"Here, Jean, let's sing this. It's appropriate. Larry, you Scotch Lazarus, find the missing sheet." And a chorus of voices within blended into the melody of the "Garden of Roses," Bob's lazy bass rumbling along a full bar behind the others.

The Doctor hummed the air wistfully, keeping time with an immaculate boot. "Agnes, ye dinna think then that my troosers will survive a wee stroll in the garden?"

"They never have!" parried his mentor and thus impugned the Doctor settled back in his chair, fixing a speculative eye upon a lighted

window opposite where, he presently opined, Judge Caperton, a favorite cribbage crony, was doubtless dressing for his party. Watching the moon crest the velvet murk above the Caperton mansion and silver the lawn, the Doctor glided happily into quotation.

*"The rising moon began to glow  
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre;  
To count her horns, wi' a' my power  
I set mysel';  
But whether she had three or four  
I could na tell.*

"Ah, Larry," as his nephew emerged from the house, "have ye deserted the singers so soon? Ye're a restless lad."

"I had a notion," said Larry, smiling, "that I'd like to stroll about and smoke. And the moonlit roses look inviting."

"Aweel, they are pretty," owned the Doctor. "Myself, though, I would have the warm life of the sun upon 'em. Your moonlight is too devitalizin', Larry, too cool and impersonal. It makes my bonny roses over into pale uniform ghosts of silver and scent, and I have a hankerin' for flesh and blood with a strong bit of individuality to spice it.

"Agnes," he added as Larry strolled away,

"I'm mortal glad the lad has come to anchor at last in Auburnia and is doin' so well with his architectin'. A verra fine sight, too, the way he keeps bachelor hoose together with his friends. Agnes, ye laughed a bit when I christened the place 'The Music Box,' eh, lass? But verra well christened it is, for music there must be when the lads all love it so."

But the Doctor's guests were beginning to arrive and presently shaking hands and beaming at the laughing crowd of old friends who were wont informally to surround him on his party night to hear him read from his thumbled and ragged volume of Burns and perform upon an aged bagpipe, he came at last to a girl with a soft mass of sunny hair and an oddly winsome face in whose warm brown eyes danced an elfin cheeriness.

"Ah, dear Leddy Rose!" he exclaimed, "I'm so mortal glad ye did not disappoint me. Slip over to the garden, dear lass," the Doctor cleared his throat with a furtive glance at Mrs. Glenmuir, "and have a wee glimpsie at my bonny flowers before the party begins. I would not have ye miss 'em." And as Rose Weston nodded cordially and slipped away, the Doctor made a great to-do about his romping collies, named from "The Twa Dogs" of Robert

Burns — for Mrs. Glenmuir's eyes were full upon him.

"Down with ye, Caesar! And you too, Luath! Your jumpin' about so hiltie-skiltie is verra bad for creases. Anyway, I did not bid ye to my party. Ye must have sneaked away from Jamie. Away with ye! Have ye no respect at all for my party troosers? Agnes, I would have ye call off your dogs! . . . Ah, here come the lads from the Music Box now and t'other three lads in the flat across the hall are likely with 'em."

A motor car drew up at the curb with a jubilant honk of announcement, disgorging a laughing crowd of men, Larry's three chums from the Music Box and the men from the rival apartment across the hall.

The Doctor waved an excited arm in response to their chorus of greeting.

"Do I see every mother's son of ye?" he demanded, striding down the walk. "Guid faith, Jerry, lad, dinna tell me Lloyd couldn't come. Out of the way there, Norman! I've a strong notion he's hidden in the car."

Midst a storm of laughter the Doctor unearthed his missing guest and bore him off in triumph up the walk.

On the veranda steps ahead, frowning at the

light in Judge Caperton's room and fretfully pulling at his white mustache, loomed the figure of Colonel Huntley, Bob's tall and military father.

"Roderick," grumbled the colonel, "there's no earthly reason why Peter shouldn't be over here by now, none whatever. He's merely fob-dobbing around as usual. I'm going right over there now — this minute — and rap on the door. May stir him up a bit. Thought perhaps before the party started we three might get a chance to finish that little game of cribbage he refused to finish last night because he'd made some fussy promise to himself to be in bed by eleven. But no — he's late of course — late as usual. Most amazing thing to me how he fusses over trivialities." And still grumbling the choleric old colonel strode off down the walk. The Doctor's eyes twinkled. It was not that punctilious Judge Caperton was ever late; it was the colonel who was unfailingly early and always impatient.

The Doctor wheeled — to find Larry and Rose Weston at his elbow.

"Well, Leddy Rose," he began, "did ye then inspect my bonny roses?"

"And found a rival admirer," smiled the girl, "with Glenmuir eyes."

"Aweel, then," shrugged the Doctor, his eyelids veiling a sly twinkle, "I will not bother makin' ye two acquaint. The roses have done so already. Into the house with ye and have some more singin'. The lads are just ahead of ye. Larry, I would have all the lads sing 'The Stein Song' with my Leddy Rose here playin'. Guid faith, Roderick Glenmuir," he added as they obediently disappeared, "would ye just listen to the colonel?"

From the judge's veranda over the way came the noise of thunderous rapping and the colonel's acrid voice sarcastically inquiring if his friend were still hunting overshoes and earlaps.

"Agnes," said the Doctor gleefully as Mrs. Glenmuir joined him, "would ye just listen to old Bob a-pesterin' Peter! Deil take it, they've let him in. Now I canna hear what he's sayin'."

"Roderick," Mrs. Glenmuir looked directly at the Doctor, who promptly looked away, "surely you knew that Larry was still in the garden when you sent Rose Weston out to see the flowers?"

"Aweel, Agnes," evaded the Doctor, rubbing his chin, "canna a body forget?"

"Surely you would not otherwise have sent her out there, knowing as you do that she and Larry are utter strangers?"

"Dinna pester me, Agnes, lass," begged the Doctor. "'Tis my party night. Why didn't ye tell the lass yourself?"

"You gave me no opportunity. Roderick, I suspect —"

But the Doctor had suddenly discovered new beauties in the summer moon and he murmured softly:

*"The night was still, and o'er the hill  
The moon shone on the castle wa',  
The mavis sang, while dewdrops hang  
Around her on the castle wa'."*

"I suspect," persisted Mrs. Glenmuir, "that you sent Rose out there purposely."

"'Willie brewed a peck o' maut,'" quoted the Doctor, once more saddling the responsibility of his reply upon Burns, while Mrs. Glenmuir raised expressive eyebrows.

"I was quite sure," she said, "that 'Willie was brewing' something by the look in his eye but —"

"Ah," broke in the harassed Doctor, "there come old Bob and Peter now. I'm mortal glad."

The bickering cribbagers were crossing the street as the Doctor spoke, Colonel Huntley firing a volley of questions at his prim companion, a fastidiously attired man of middle

age, with sparse iron-gray hair and a lean, dark, kindly face. In the house a vigorous chorus of male voices struck up the "Stein Song" and the Doctor turned impulsively to his wife.

"Ah, Agnes, lass," he exclaimed affectionately, "dinna ye bother your pretty head about me. I'm a meddlesome, matchmakin' old saw-bones. I just had a wee picture in my eye how verra pretty the dear lass would look to Larry in the bonny roses and the moonlight."

## Chapter 3

### *The Westons*

**R**ODERICK," said Mrs. Glenmuir early one evening in the week following the Doctor's rose-party, "I'm afraid it's about time for our yearly call upon the Westons."

"Hum!" said the Doctor in a discouraging monotone and sniffed, indicating as he did so a full page advertisement in his *Medical Journal* in which a very prim and exquisitely tailored gentleman was stiffly driving the very primmest of motor cars.

"There, Agnes," he exclaimed with gloomy satisfaction, "there now is such a thing, I take it, as you would have me be. I have been lookin' him over most careful. Now I dinna suppose his troosers are ever baggy and certainly he would not leave his motor lyin' idle in the barn to scallawag around behind old piebald Peggy. Oh, my, my, my, no, Agnes! Such a spruce and fancy Dandy Jim as all that would ride about among his patients in his spotless motor, as ye would have me do, all creased up the middle like the king's newspaper. How he would uphold the dignity of the Medical Pro-

fession! I canna even squint at the bonny little man without mortal pangs of envy. . . . Hum — Ah! . . . Listen to this, Agnes: 'The experiments of that eminent psychologist, Douglas MacIlvane, are astonishing the medical world!' Agnes, lass, 'tis Duggie, my old friend Duggie! When we were at Glasgow together we used to quarrel fearful about the treatment of mental disease and he came to America in the steamer with me, swearin' earnest and stubborn to stick to his daffy psychotherapy no matter what I might say — "

"And since the evening is free," persisted Mrs. Glenmuir, ignoring the evasion, "Jean and I fancied we might all go to-night and have it over with."

"Impossible, Agnes," declared the Doctor, fairly cornered. "I have no suitable troosers. The summer is verra bad for creases."

Now the Doctor rarely had any suitable 'troosers' when it was time to call upon the Westons, wherefore to-night his statement was refuted by material evidence.

"I canna conceive," he sniffed, frowning, "who 'twas began this whig-ma-doodle custom of callin' formal upon Rodney Larimore Weston, as he so grandly calls himself, and his leddy. I just canna abide listenin' to the

man's clash-ma-claver about his art and his nerves, and savin' a glimpse of the dear Leddy Rose, I dinna care a boddle about callin' anyway. One thing, Agnes," with biting reference to an abominated silk hat; "I winna wear my Hamfatters' hat no matter what ye may say." And the Doctor stalked from the room, glowering. Scarcely had he disappeared, however, before the door opened again and his head appeared.

"Dinna mind me, Agnes," he said unexpectedly. "I'm in a bit of a crankous mood. I'll phone Bob and Larry to come along with us and liven things up a bit." And later Mrs. Glenmuir decided that a "crankous" mood, whatever it might be, was also a somewhat dangerous and uncertain one.

"Bob's musickin' with Larry at the Music Box," announced the Doctor presently from the telephone. "We'll drop in and get 'em."

\* \* \* \* \*

The string quartette of the Music Box had cordially stood sponsor for the rival bachelor establishment across the hall, christening it, in due time, when its three inmates had with many grins acquired a clarinet, an oboe and a flute in friendly rivalry, "The Cave of the Winds."

Jeremiah Colson, Artist — Norman Ames, Dentist — and Roger Brett, Civil Engineer — thus read the Auburnia directory in concise description of the wind trio, but the copy which hung in the Cave itself bore a heavily interpolated question mark after Norman's profession that was distinctly accusatory.

Unlike the struggling beginners in the Cave with their frenzied scales and tootings, the string quartette brought to its assembly an individual proficiency of no mean order. Larry with his cello, Grant Dallinger with his violin and Quin Courtney with his viola had made a popular trio in college days with Bob Huntley at the piano. And Lloyd Ridgley, Larry's young assistant in "architectin'," had since made a willing fourth.

The two apartments lay upon either side of a wide hall on the topmost floor of a small apartment house, the menage of the Music Box in the hands of one O'Hagan, that of the Cave at the mercy of an aged and benevolent negro called Uncle Shad, a popularization of Shadrach, both members of that erratic, worshipping clientele of characters ranging from tramps to socialistic poets whom the Doctor somehow contrived to pick up and make his friends for life.

A cataclysm of toots broke out in the Cave

of the Winds as the elevator shot skyward with the Glenmuirs. The Doctor made a wry face.

"Oh, my, my!" he lamented. "Verra bad, verra bad indeed. Sequel—the janitor."

The prophecy was accurate. The sequel arrived and departed, followed by some friendly advice relative to the janitor's jealousy of budding genius. In the calmer melange of toots, the Doctor led the way across the hall and opened the Cave door.

"Would ye just glimpse the lads a-metro-nomin' with their feet, Agnes!" he murmured, surveying a line of music stands and a trio of backs. "Ye can see their youthful enthusiasm in the verra puff of their cheeks."

The startled pipers wheeled in indignation.

"The building," mused Jerry Colson, "doth abound in jealous beings."

"Come over to the Music Box with me," invited the Doctor. "Then my voice winna have quite so much competition—"

And thus it was that the Doctor arrived at the Music Box with the wind trio at his heels. Enthusiasm begot one of his inspirational moments.

"Laddies," he exclaimed to Mrs. Glenmuir's dismay as the string quartette swarmed about him in cordial greeting, "I would have every

mother's son of ye come along callin' with me and have a wee bit of music at the Westons. We'll surprise the dear Leddy Rose. Ding it! I wish I had my bagpipe . . . though," he added, "'twould doubtless get some upon Rodney's nerves.

"I just canna abide the man!" Mrs. Glenmuir heard him confiding a little later to his nephew. "Did I tell ye, Larry, that in the Weston family mother goes to business and father takes an afternoon nap? Un-hum! So it is.

*"Some, lucky, find a flow'ry spot,  
For which they never toiled nor swat!"*

He quoted the couplet fiercely. "And that's Rodney Larimore Weston. When he had money he did nothin' at all, and when betimes he lost it all with his visionary schemin', he did the same. Fascinatin' as he is with his healsome look and his big talk, I canna abide him! But Mother Letty and all her pretty daughters worship the idle skellum like a god! Oh, my, my, my, yes, Larry, he's a genius with temperament and nerves and all t'other niffy-naffy fixin's necessary to set him artistically apart from other men. Pesters a bit of canvas with a brush and calls it paintin', but I've a notion

when he goes about with one of his picture monstrosities under his arm, 'tis his magnetism and not his work that wins, for," vexedly, "the man's brimful of it."

"He sells some work then?"

"Maybe one picture in two years," said the Doctor tartly, "but, as Bobbie Burns would put it, it keeps him 'all puffed up wi' windy pride!' Better to my thinkin' if he sold none of them. It would maybe puncture his rainbow soap-bubble of future glory and shame him into workin'. Ah, Agnes, did I not warn ye? Already it's rainin' fast. 'Tis not a verra propitious night for callin', as I pointed out." And grumbling, the Doctor raised his umbrella, shrugging at the chilly dampness of the summer night.

Many-roomed and rambling, the Weston home lay to the north in the older part of Auburnia, its windows many-paned crystal checkerboards of another day. Backgrounded by an orchard of cherry trees and a crazy barn, the old house stretched out shallow arms on either side of a geranium-bordered walk, straight into the heart of the old-fashioned gardens beyond. Here, in seasonal parade, hollyhocks and sun-flowers bloomed by the picket fence in the rear; dahlias and gladiolas peered inquisitively in at

the kitchen windows; and, haloing the old house in the perfume of the past, a drowsy line of ragged sailors and fluttering pansies bent velvet heads to the sweet alyssum and silver-seeded portulaca at their feet. Drawn too about the crazy barn in Andalusian cordon, tiger lily and marigold flared brilliantly by the side of the blood-red fuchsia and the bleeding heart; but everywhere in the mingling one caught the color touch of an artist.

At the end of the western wing lay Rodney's studio, its line of many-paned windows framing a nocturne of old-fashioned gardens to the side and rear, and the quiet, elm-shadowed street to the front. No hint of fading charm marred its cheerful exoticism; a box marked "Father Weston's Studio" to which every wage-earning daughter cheerfully contributed, had long ago rescued it from the old-fashioned maze of rooms about it and made it quite as handsome and Sybaritic as the artist himself.

Here in his great chair one might find Rodney any night, smiling indulgently upon the slight, brown-eyed, tired-looking little wife, winsome of cheek and lip like Rose, who turned after business hours to the relaxation of entertaining her husband. For Rodney, after a hard day with his canvas and pigments, rarely found his

eyes equal to the added strain of perusing his newspaper and this service his wife was more than willing to take upon herself. Thus in utter contentment the two spent their cheerful evenings, Rodney listening or dozing as the mood seized him, Letty turning noiselessly from the newspaper to her sewing whenever her artist dozed. And thus presently the Doctor and his party found them when Lisbeth, the Westons' sole domestic, had ushered them into the studio.

"Roderick!" exclaimed Rodney, lazily emerging from his chair by the fireplace where a slight fire crackled fitfully to rout the chill, "I have just been telling Letty this instant that it was certainly time for your evening with us."

"So he has, Roderick, so he has!" fluttered Mrs. Weston and something in her voice invested Rodney's careless prevision with the dignity of a rare and difficult achievement.

There were times when the Doctor quite lost patience with Letty, much as he admired her. Her subtle flattery and self-effacement in Rodney's presence were so unlike her at other times that he could never quite bring himself to understand it. So to-night, with an ambiguous comment upon Rodney's "barometric bones," the Doctor formally presented his orchestra, at which Rodney had already glanced in startled

interest, and fell to fingering a magazine without joining further in the pleasant chatter all about him.

This, of itself, was distinctly ominous but when, after the ladies were duly seated, the Doctor made straight for Rodney's great chair by the fire and deliberately entrenched himself therein, there was a perceptible flutter throughout the room. The Doctor's action was very definite heterodoxy.

Now this magnificent chair of Rodney's was one which the artist himself had fondly presented to his wife one Christmas and which by some inexplicable twist of destiny had since become as intimately his own as his fastidious clothing. In the Weston home it was a sacred object which no one presumed to desecrate, and the Doctor, in his occasional Westonian tirades, was wont to term it "The Throne Chair," sarcastically commiserating the unfortunate king who had been obliged to purchase such an essential article of state with a portion of his Christmas exchequer. What wonder then that Letty cleared her throat nervously and Mrs. Glenmuir stared aghast? That Jean stifled a wild desire to laugh and Bob took refuge in a strangled cough? Clearly the Doctor was on the warpath.

Never before had he sat himself down in the Throne Chair but then, never before, Mrs. Glenmuir wildly remembered, had he called upon Rodney in the uncertain throes of a "crankous" mood! As for Rodney himself, he appeared quite helpless, straightway beginning a purposeless amble about the room and carefully ignoring a chair or so he passed in a restless but ever-patient survey of his studio walls.

"Sit yourself down, man Rodney, sit yourself down!" exclaimed the Doctor, briskly turning the log.

Rodney started violently. "Do excuse me, Roderick!" he begged. "I'm very restless and the room is still chilly. My nerves will not let me sit down. Presently — presently."

Mrs. Glenmuir instantly trained a compelling gaze upon the usurper in the Throne Chair. To no avail. The Doctor continued to accord the fire a careful supervision and refused to look up.

"Roderick," she said at last, "you have Rodney's chair."

"Whist, Agnes," exclaimed the Doctor loudly, "didn't ye hear the guid man say himself that his nerves just winna let him sit down? Letty, what would be the meanin' of the fearsome racket in the barn?"

"It's the twins," said Mrs. Weston, coloring. "Lisbeth was too busy to do the barn work as usual to-night and the twins are making a lark of bedding old Molly down for the night. Just hear them! They romp in the hay like a pair of boys."

"Aweel," murmured the Doctor with disarming cordiality, "'tis pleasant work and healthy and verra guid for the nerves." And it was quite evident from the set of the Doctor's chin that he was prepared, if assailed, to launch forth a mass of clinical facts in support of barn therapeutics. But with the entrance of Rose and baby Tavia, who invariably won exemption from early bed-going on the night of the Doctor's call, the electric atmosphere was for a time at least clarified.

Swiftly alternating moods were no rarity with the Doctor. Now with the ready twinkle in his keen and kindly eyes, he held forth welcoming hands to the small "bairnie" with whom he was at all times a favorite, and drew a chair beside him for his Leddy Rose.

"God bless my soul!" he beamed as Tavia with a shriek of delight clambered aboard his long-suffering knees, "what have we here, eh? . . . Hum!" as Tavia unearthed one of the old-fashioned sticks of candy with which the

Doctor's pockets were eternally ammunitioned. "Robbin' the commissariat, eh? I canna conceive just why 'tis all the bairnies must rummage about my clothes so hiltie-skiltie with such scant respect for my dignity. I have been told by my critics that it's a verra bad thing for the knees of a body's troosers. To Banbury Cross, eh, ye wee pirate! Verra well, then, to Banbury Cross we go together, and deil take the troosers. Heigho, I dinna care a boddle for my creases." And the Doctor returned from Banbury Cross as usual with hair and knees awry.

"Well, Leddy Rose?" The Doctor glanced searchingly across at Rose's smiling face, framed in a halo of firelight. The girl's warm brown eyes met his unflinchingly but her color deepened. Many a kindly lecture on the value of rest had been presaged by this very look, and to-night would have been no exception but for the sound of a whistled duet in the hallway as the notorious Weston twins came marching in from the barn and whistled shrilly up the stairway for the others. And presently the studio was besieged by a charming bevy of brown-eyed, fair-haired, laughing girls.

They were a winsome lot, King Rodney's daughters, wonderfully fair and clear of skin, with the charm and coloring of wild roses and

so like Rose and Mother Letty that Larry marveled. But there was one who plainly stood the beauty of them all, Carol, a girl of seventeen, vividly unlike her sisters, sable of hair, gypsy-red of cheek, with sloe-black eyes and olive skin like her father.

The whistling twins were as unmistakable as they were inseparable, mischief dancing eternally in their alert brown eyes. With characteristic energy they impressed the younger members of the Doctor's party for musical duty across the hall and whistling a marching duet headed them to the studio door.

Now it was that an irresistible temptation assailed the desperate Doctor—to leave the responsibility of the annual studio call in his wife's hands and join the lads and lasses. But when at last he artfully contrived to get himself so entangled that in the course of time he would have appeared the innocent victim of an enforced exodus along with the others, it was Rodney who recalled him by begging his guileful fellow-conspirators, Bob and Larry, not to crowd the Doctor so! With a smothered groan that barely escaped detection by masquerading as a cough, the prisoner returned to the Throne Chair and glowered fiercely at the fire. From then on the "crankous" mood was decidedly ascendant.

From the old music room in the left wing came tantalizing toots and booms as the orchestra assembled, a cheerful hum of voices and laughter, an occasional *A* on the old piano and eventually the strains of "A Spanish Cavalier" with orchestral obligato. The Doctor, like many another usurper, squirmed uncomfortably in the Throne Chair. One desire alone lured with its powerful call — to join the lads and lasses!

"Just hear them a-daffin' about over there!" he exclaimed gloomily and Rodney, who, after roaming about the room like a badly buffeted derelict, had come to sudden anchor in Rose's deserted chair by the fire, nodded sympathetically.

"Terrible, isn't it?" he queried helplessly. "Roderick, you can not imagine what I suffer through the — the exuberance of my daughters!"

"And yet he is so patient, Roderick," interposed Letty with shining eyes, "so very patient with it all. Never a word to the girls, and really the house is more than lively. A little trying for high-strung nerves, especially when one must lay upon them the added burden of creative work."

"Hum!" said the Doctor unexpectedly, and subsided.

“Why should I complain?” begged Rodney gently. “Youth, I take it, is always thoughtless. Hedonistic, all of us, until we have passed the stage of adolescence.”

Thus spoke Rodney, arch-disciple surely of hedonism himself, and the Doctor fell suddenly to poking at the fire as one who must disintegrate something in the perversion of an awakening violence. A golden shower of fire flared cheerily up the chimney, lighting up Rodney’s handsome face and eyes into which had crept a subtle melancholy.

“Do you know, Roderick,” he said thoughtfully, “to the turbulence of my home atmosphere this summer I attribute the fact that I have been but indifferently successful with my painting. With the twins graduating from the Academy and all the attendant celebration and excitement, the month has been one of great perturbation. Strange how the events of an evening creep insistently into the colors I use on the following day. For instance, Roderick,” Rodney leaned forward eagerly, at his best as ever when the subject was himself, “the last time the girls were singing — Letty, dear, *will* you close the door? Eileen’s contralto is a bit boisterous. And the young man with the oboe has his own notions about harmony. Er — the

last time they sang I found myself working the next day in horrible crimsons and purples, a polychrome whose lights and shadows clashed atrociously even as the sounds of the night before had clashed. Every impression, I take it, lingers in my subconscious mind, which is perhaps unduly sensitive, to be translated presently through the medium of color. Though to the layman it may appear incredible, I can trace in my work the effect of the slightest domestic mishap or unrest."

How much Rodney loved to dabble in self-analysis, and how many of his artistic difficulties that analysis explained away! The Doctor sniffed—a sniff that happily was lost in a hasty comment of his wife's.

"Just last night, for instance," continued Rodney, mercifully unaware of the volcanic crater of the "crankous" mood upon which he trembled, "Mollie—dear knows how, for she is decidedly old—kicked out the side of the barn—"

"No doubt Mollie is old," conceded the Doctor, clutching at the single portion of the narrative to which he could cordially accede, "but, man Rodney, the barn is older!"

"Kicked out the side of the barn," went on Rodney patiently, "and skipped through it in

a sudden spasm of rejuvenation. The twins caught her after a quite unnecessary amount of dancing and waving their arms about and whooping wildly — odd, Roderick, they appeared to enjoy it! But as I stood there by the window my subconscious mind absorbed that atmospheric coloring like a sensitized photographic plate. An old white horse with an angular gallop, a ruined barn and the gray of a cloudy twilight — salient features, forlorn as you see — and to-day, well,” Rodney sighed, “all day I have been working in bisters!”

“Blisters?” queried the Doctor.

Into Rodney’s handsome eyes crept a faint reproach.

“Tonal bisters!” he corrected gently.

“Guid faith!” apologized the Doctor, “I must have been thinkin’ of the paintin’ of a house with its facility for blisters. Doubtless my subconscious mind was takin’ it for granted that ye had mended the barn and painted over it.”

Again an electric silence fell over the studio, for when before in the royal annals had King Rodney heard himself mentioned in a breath with house painting and barn repairs! Still, though every defiant line of the usurper in the Throne Chair betokened an expectant wait for

debatable material, to Mrs. Glenmuir's intense relief none came.

Altogether the evening was more than trying. Unfailingly the Doctor's comments were unexpected; unfailingly King Rodney, no matter how circumvented, returned to the subject of himself. And across the hallway the Doctor's lads and lasses laughed and sang and the Doctor himself stared with gloomy envy at the door. Mrs. Glenmuir watched the grandfather's clock in an agony of unrest and apprehension, and Letty, accustomed to a life of back-patting, filled the conversational gaps of electric silence with soothing comments. Stampeded into a sort of caloric masterpiece by the Doctor's insistent pooking, the wood-fire flamed fiercely up the chimney. Then in the midst of it all, and in the very climax of Rodney's description of his mental forces, the crankous Doctor fulfilled his wife's foreboding and, consistently unexpected, fell asleep.

"Such, I fancy, is the psychology of inspiration," Rodney declared, then, catching the gentle but somewhat throaty gurgle of his companion, stopped in hurt surprise. The Doctor awoke with a guilty start and glanced sharply about the room as if aware of the unfriendly suspicions of the others.

“ ‘Psychology of inspiration!’ ” he snapped triumphantly to prove by the iteration that his subconscious mind at least had been alert, and Rodney forthwith ambled back to his pandect with a generous smile. Wonderfully handsome he looked in the firelight, wonderfully convincing his deep, musical voice as he talked, and the Doctor, annoyed as he ever was when he felt the insidious appeal of the man’s magnetism, angrily steeled himself to ward it off. He was more than successful. Sleepy and persistently crankous as the Doctor was, Rodney’s lances of magnetism splintered against his armor unheeded.

“ I tell you, Roderick, a man of genius can not be judged by conventional standards. Concessions must be made to his aesthetic side. Idiosyncrasies he is bound to have, idiosyncrasies, I say, purely temperamental, which in no way impair his gift — ”

But here the Doctor delivered himself of a prodigious “Hum!” and his quaking consort felt that now at last he was about to disburden his mind for all time upon the subject of artistic temperaments. Baby Tavia saved the day. Seated beside the Doctor, she had been relating an involved description of Cousin Jim’s country pump, accoutered with an interesting rotary

movement, a chain leading cisternward and a handle. Now in the lull which followed the Doctor's ominous exclamation she laid one tiny, dimpled hand upon the Doctor's knee.

"Now, Doctor Rod," she demanded, "just *why* does Cousin Jim have to grind his water when we don't?" and the general spasm of laughter carried the evening well beyond another danger-point.

"Roderick," ventured Rodney later as the Doctor looked at the clock and summoned the truant members of his party, "perhaps you'd better send me some more of my medicine in the morning. I—I am not myself. My nerves —"

"Pooh! Pooh!" exclaimed the Doctor bluntly. "Pooh! Pooh! Try a bit of barn work!" But, meeting Mrs. Glenmuir's desperate gaze he added lamely, "Verra well, man Rodney, verra well, I'll be sendin' ye some in the mornin'." And the Doctor shook hands with Letty and followed Rose eagerly to the door.

Outside Bob counseled an egress from the Weston grounds by the driveway, for the path to the gate lay between hedges which dripped and tossed in the wind and rain, and the party set off along the gravel path beneath the windows, with the Doctor well on ahead conducting

a pedestrian express for the Hame and Flora's coffee. Bob glanced drolly at the others and they all broke suddenly into a smothered laugh of reminiscence.

"Oh, Jean!" groaned Mrs. Glenmuir. "I'm a nervous wreck. If I'd only known just what sort of thing a crankous mood is! Larry, what on earth is he doing now?"

The Doctor, plainly scandalized, had planted himself upon the lawn beneath the studio windows, where a flapping shade gave periodic glimpses of the room beyond. A mental picture of medical fingers rapping peremptorily on the screen to startle Rodney with an invisible purveyor of acrid advice, gave wings to Mrs. Glenmuir's feet.

"Oh, Roderick," she implored, "Roderick!" but the Doctor dabbed at his wife with a warning hand.

"Whist, Agnes," he hissed fiercely; "dinna I know well enough that I should not spy upon them — that it's a whig-ma-doodle trick and all that? If ye must know the truth, I dinna care a boddle. Agnes, doubtless ye winna bring yourself to believe it, but Rodney's been restin' his old noddle back in the Throne Chair while Letty took off his collar and that plaid sash he calls an artist's cravat!"

Again the shade flapped back and the Doctor stared.

"God bless my soul, Agnes," he whispered, aghast, "Letty's takin' off the bluntie's *shoes!*"

This final glimpse of Mother Letty kneeling to remove the royal shoes was too much for the Doctor. With a snort of unutterable disgust, he charged off across the lawn homewards, followed by a panic-stricken escort fearful of detection. At the street he halted.

"Agnes," he began in considerable excitement, "I just must express my opinion of that conceited gowk to all of ye, and I would consider it a verra great favor if ye would kindly refrain from headin' me off the subject as ye so often do. Blether a bit I will, no matter what, and if ye all wish to desert me, I will grumble to myself!" And with their prompt chorus of allegiance, the storm broke.

"Guid faith!" he finished, "the man has megascope eyes!"

"Megascope eyes!" gasped Jean, stifling her laughter.

"Megascope eyes!" nodded the Doctor shortly. "And, Jeannie, dinna ye laugh up your sleeve at your poor old father. 'Tis not respectful." There was a significant silence and the Doctor sniffed.

"Dinna any of ye know what a megascope is?" he demanded. There was a profound silence.

"Some kind of magic lantern arrangement for throwing enlarged images on a screen, isn't it?" suggested Grant Dallinger hopefully.

"There ye have it!" proclaimed the Doctor with a snort of acrid satisfaction. "Small as the shameless man's guid sense and character and ability may be, to say nothing at all of his baby brain, with his handsome megascope eyes he throws such an enormous image of them all upon the screen of his fancy that it just fair dazzles him! 'Tis no wonder he canna perceive what a sorry figure he's cuttin' with the rest of us."

"You're a little hard on the royal brain," suggested Jean, pouring oil upon the fire. "I've heard lots of people say he's a very deep thinker."

"Jeannie, don't!" begged Mrs. Glenmuir.

But the Doctor, relieved by his spasm, was drifting back into rare good humor.

"Aweel, dear lass," he said quaintly, "in the great kirk of words we call *Expression* there are, I take it, two ministers: Mr. Ambiguity and Mr. Deep-Thought. I canna help thinkin' that many and many a time they change pulpits

without the congregation suspectin' the difference." And with a wry grimace he finished:

*"We wander there, we wander here  
We eye the rose upon the brier,  
Unmindful that the thorn is near  
Among the leaves!"*

"Thorn!" exclaimed Jean loyally.

"Nay, lass," broke in the Doctor warmly, "I did not mean there's any thorn to the dear Leddy Rose. Bless your heart, no! I had reference as usual to the family rose-tree. I wonder," he added slyly, "just what colors Rodney will be usin' in his work to-morrow after the atmospheric tints of to-night!"

Whatever the colors through which it was expressed, Rodney's subconscious and conscious mind alike never forgot that astonishing and nerve-racking night when the crankous Doctor usurped the dynastic rights to the Throne Chair, fell asleep in the very heart of the royal monologue and pooh-poohed the royal nerves! In after years he fancied that it presaged that unforgettable train of events which were destined to alter so greatly the nature of his domestic caliphate.

## Chapter 4

*Concerns itself with a midnight chat, a pot of coffee and a doctor's book*

**O**UTSIDE the Hame o' Roses the Doctor's party halted.

"In with ye all," commanded the Doctor. "Flora's guid coffee will warm the chill away."

But Bob said he was sleepy and would move on home, and the others trailed after him, whistling.

"'Tis a matter of three nights, Larry," hinted the Doctor, "since ye dropped in for one of our midnight gossips over Flora's coffee —"

"Gossip with your medical friend if you like!" called Quin Courtney. "Myself, I need beauty sleep. And Grant needs it more than I, though he wouldn't admit it."

"Medical friend, eh!" beamed the Doctor. "I like that. 'Tis nothing at all to be an uncle, Larry. Ye canna help yourself. 'Tis much to be a friend. Nice lads, all of them," he added as Grant was led off grumbling by Quin. "I dinna think, Larry, lad, I have ever seen such grand guid fellowship. Grant and Quin bicker

with each other like a pair of crows. And I would I were a caricaturist to sketch in Jerry's lean length when he walks between the lazy, fat lads. No gainsayin' it, Norm and Roger are in mortal need of exercise."

He led the way into an old-fashioned office in which an air of comfort dwarfed the fearsome dignity of an X-ray machine and a closet of drugs, quoting:

*"Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,  
They rove amang the blooming heather;  
But Yarrow braes nor Ettrick shaws  
Can match the lads o' Galla Water!"*

"Hum. . . . So ye fancy ye and Jeannie will go on up to bed, eh, Agnes?" as Scotch Flora appeared in the doorway with the Doctor's nightly coffee. "Well, suit yourself, dear lass. Myself I canna resist Flora's coffee." And bustling about, the Doctor pushed forward a box of his atrocious cigars. They were smilingly declined, an unvarying occurrence among the initiate.

"I might have guessed it, ye young Sybarite!" he grumbled good-humoredly. "Aweel, maybe ye'll find one of these more to your likin'. Old Bob brought 'em with him last night to smoke

through the cribbagin'. Like his tongue, his taste is a wee bit critical. Deil take it, Larry, I canna find your cup. Flora will not remember to leave it here on the desk beside my own. Ah!" the Doctor unearthed a huge cup and filled it to the brim. "Now, laddie, we can hobnob together until cockcrow if we have a mind to, provided the Leddy Glenmuir does not rap upon the floor. Well, Larry, what did ye think of the Westons?"

"I doubt if I have ever seen a happier family. A girl's laughter lurks in every crevice of the old house like the scent of pine in a forest. Their good-fellowship is irresistible."

"Happy! I would have ye find me their equal in congeniality. Why, Larry, ye canna tempt the lasses away from home of an evenin' no matter what ye may offer. With their readin' aloud together and their studyin' and singin' of nights, they're as clannish as our own Highlanders. A delightful, capable, all-sufficient, man-ignorin' clan! The lads of Auburnia could tell ye many a tale of fruitless chasin' after the Weston lasses."

Rising, he took down a heavy volume from a shelf above his desk and traced a page of records with his forefinger.

"Larry, ye couldn't have come to a better

botanist to label your pretty flowers. Didn't I myself bring all the Weston bairnies into the world, beginnin' with the dear Leddy Rose herself when I had but just hung out my shingle in Auburnia to please your Aunt Agnes? . . . Hum. . . . Rose — " his keen eyes flashed humorously. " I take it the lass has told ye her age already, Larry? 'Tis a disconcertin' way she has when the lads bother her; and twenty-eight to Leddy Rose's notions is a venerable and prohibitive age."

Larry's tell-tale face was answer enough and the Doctor turned back to his book of medical hieroglyphics with a chuckle of enjoyment.

"Rose-Marie," he read reminiscently, a gentle homage in his deep voice for his favorite Weston; "so Letty named the lass when we saw her face. Ah, Larry," the Doctor wheeled, his eyes moist with affection, "savin' my own golden-eyed Jeannie, I have never seen such a wee flower face as God gave the bebbie Rose. And Mother Letty, straightway she would have the bairn called Rose — 'Rose' for the wee floweret itself, she said, and 'Rose-Marie' for the fragrance ye just canna help thinkin' of when ye say it all. Ah, smart as they all are, there's none of the lasses as brainy as the dear Leddy Rose! No, 'tis not all my partiality for

the lass, Larry. Did she not go to college with my own Jeannie and finish the course a guid year ahead of them all with an A. M. degree? Hum! she was needed at home to help with the motherin' of Rodney. A. M!" added the Doctor tartly. "The lass did not know it would come to mean 'Assistant Mother.'"

The Doctor adjusted his reading glasses and studied the records again in absorbed attention.

"Come a year later we have Sonia with her broad white brow and her keen eyes, editor now of the *Fashion Review*; and after two years, Marcia, Mother Letty's private secretary. Then two years more and there were the twins, Eileen and Lucia. Guid faith, Larry, the Weston twins, what with their whistlin' duets, their fencin' and swimmin' and trampin' about the country in sweaters like two rompin' lads, are as deil-may-care a pair as ye'll find." And the Doctor with a hopeless shake of his head passed on to the final trio of Rodney's daughters, June, aged twenty, Carol seventeen and Tavia seven.

"June is the musician of them all and Carol is but a braw young lassie still in school, but she's keen and bright like all the rest and to boot a bit restless and high-strung. Verra handsome, too, like Aunt Ann, her father's sister who does not come frequent to Auburnia, I sus-

pect because she has no great respect for her brother, small blame to her. With her mountain-climbing and her grand guid self-reliance Ann should have been the man of the pair — and is. Octavia,” he finished, “eighth born and, please God, the last! Smart lasses all of them but I’ve a notion the Weston lasses all take their keen brains from the maternal grandfather and the mother — ”

“The grandfather then was unusual?”

“A keen man. A scholar and a financier. It was actin’ as his private secretary as a lass that gave Letty her trainin’ in Wall Street.”

“Wall Street! You don’t mean to tell me the little woman is in Wall Street!”

“I do that!” nodded the Doctor. “A broker. Rain or snow, ye may find her commutin’ hither and tither with Marcia, and in all Wall Street ye winna find a man who does not hold her high. Ask Davy Gordon — ye mind meetin’ him here. Larry, at my rose-party? Private secretary to the President of Alabama Coal and Iron he is — he’ll tell ye what they think of her. . . . Coffee, Larry? . . . Hum, ’tis well ye don’t. The pot’s empty. Well, laddie, there ye have the Westons, Letty and all her leesome brood and that gowk of a Rodney. Marcia and Sonia ye will find a practical, matter-of-fact

pair, runnin' mostly to head; and June and Carol afire with temperament — runnin' mostly to heart. The twins are in a class by themselves. And Mother Rose takes care of them all.

“I mind me of King Rodney's birthday night. Larry, with my own two eyes, a-drivin' by the windows with Peggy, I saw the lasses crown him with flowers and dance merrily about him to a whistled march by the twins, showerin' him with birthday gifts and flowers — all in their pretty white gowns in celebration, mind ye, and the King himself in evenin' clothes for the coronation, with a bunch of flowers in his hand. Oh, my, my, my, yes, Larry! 'Tis a verra great day with the Westons, though I dinna think the state as a whole observes it yet. Best silver, flowers upon the chandeliers and mantels, best Sunday furbelows and Rodney's favorite dishes, all cooked by the Leddy Rose herself.

“Ah, Larry,” the Doctor returned to an encomium of his favorite as a bee seeks the sweetest flower, “ye just canna conceive how cheerfully the dear lass slipped into her mother's place at home; and she was not without ambitious dreamies of her own I take it from what my Jeannie has told me of college days. I dinna think any of the Weston lasses realize how

much each day they owe to Mother Rose's busy fingers. She is so swift and sweet and tireless with her sunny heart and her winsome smile and her busy forethought for them all, God bless the lass!"

The Doctor rose abruptly.

"Virgil may sing of his Dido's slighted love," he added fiercely, "and Dante of his Inferno, but, Larry, I would have some poet sing for me the tragedy of the older sister. Ye will not find more unassumin' sacrifice, I take it, than the mothering sister in the home, too busy to be young!" He glanced searchingly at his nephew's face. "Larry, your old uncle canna help bein' meddlesome. I dinna wish to pester ye with my curiosity, lad, but —" he halted, his kindly eyes significant.

Larry colored.

"Yes?" he said.

"Well, dear lad, ye seemed verra much taken up with the Leddy Rose and I could not help speakin' of it, I'm so mortal fond of the lass myself. Ye dinna mind my speakin' so, Larry?"

"Certainly not!" The response was so hearty that the Doctor looked relieved. "Ever since I saw her that night in the moonlight and roses — we came face to face in the garden,

strangers, the night of your rose-party," he explained, while the Doctor wisely looked away, "and she was so frank and friendly, so utterly at her ease — "

"Ye winna ever find the coquettish challenge of sex in Leddy Rose's eyes, Larry; only the cordial fire of friendliness and impulse and an immortal cheeriness."

Larry nodded.

"I know. Her composure rather staggered me, it was so unaffected. 'I'm quite sure you're Larry,' she said. 'You've Glenmuir eyes!' Somehow I can't forget the quaint winsomeness of her, standing there so slim and white among the roses, holding out her hands to me with the sweet naturalness of a child."

"Larry," exclaimed the Doctor impetuously, "ye dinna mean that ye fell head over kerturby in love with the lass at the sight of her! Hum!" his eyes keen with delight. "Laddie, I can see by the verra flush of ye that I have struck the truth. Ah, 'tis ever the Glenmuir way. With us love is not cumulative. It comes in bulk. So it was with your father before ye, Larry, and so with me. Did I not catch a wee glimpsie of your Aunt Agnes tourin' in Glasgow when I had but just got my degree in the University, a young deil of a sawbones scallawaggin' about,

and did I not straightway follow the lass back to America and pester her betimes with my big talk of kidnappin' and suicide and the like of that until she eloped with me away from that griffin of an Aunt Harriet, who always called me a wild tormentin' Scotchie! A Glenmuir is a wild Highlander in his heart for all time, Larry, and he canna down it." And eloquently he quoted:

*"O, wert thou in the cauld blast  
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,  
My plaidie to the angry airt,  
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee!"*

"And so it is with all of us when once we glimpse the leddy."

"It — it all came into my life so unexpectedly," said Larry. "And Rose is so — well, so different. How long —" he floundered boyishly — "how soon —"

The Doctor came promptly and heartily to the rescue.

"Ye mean how long ye would have to coort the lass, Larry?"

"Yes." Larry's searching glance found the Doctor's eyes as keen and kindly as always, and ready sympathy rang in his voice.

"Bless your heart, laddie, 'tis no easy question. I canna say ye have picked a guid adviser. If I told my own ideas abroad, I would doubtless have all the lads of Auburnia kidnappin' the lass of their fancy upon sight. Maybe a year, Larry, would keep the gossipin' tongues about from clackin'."

The cathedral clock boomed two. With a start Larry rose to go.

"Larry," the Doctor patted his nephew's back with frank affection, "I just canna tell ye how it all pleases me. God grant ye will not find any thorn to the woin' of your pretty rose. I would not have ye wounded."

And this was still upon the Doctor's mind when, in his bedtime tour of inspection, he came upon Scotch Jamie, dozing in the kitchen.

"Whist, Jamie," he said sternly; "to bed with ye!" And then in a cautious undertone, "Wake a bit, lad. Ye mind how I showed ye the way to let the wind out from the auto tire? . . . Well, I would have ye do that again before ye go up to bed. Dinna be noisy and dinna gab to Flora. Give the thingumaderry on the rim a push. I winna feel like breezin' about so lively after callin' and gossipin' so late, and I canna take old Peggy again if that deil of a car's in guid workin' order. Be verra cau-

tious, Jamie, verra cautious, for I've been suspected a bit of inventin' disorders in my gasoline horsie to get me out doctorin' behind Peggy. And, Jamie, dinna ye forget to come in at breakfast with 'em all listenin', and tell me the tire is flat."

## Chapter 5

### *The wooing of Rose*

**I**T was altogether perhaps the oddest wooing a girl ever had. Never a word of the turbulence surging in the heart of her Highland lover, never a forgotten moment when the diffident pressure of a hand might have hinted much. For over many a midnight pot of coffee, with the winter wind rattling the old Hame and the log blazing up the chimney, Larry had been bound again and again to his full year of silence which, like the old-fashioned gentleman he was, he scrupulously observed even while deploring the avuncular promise that bound him to it.

Still, as Larry often conceded, the Doctor, with his keener insight into the selfless heart of his favorite, was right. Rose and her home life were unparalleled in his experience. She was the tireless pivot of a domestic abnormality whose possible crotchets one could not possibly hope to gauge. A careless word, a sudden awakening into the life of self which Larry's love must bring with it, and with frightened wings Rose would be up and away, guarding her

dependent family brood from the invasion of any dawning personal desire.

"Nay, laddie," advised the Doctor kindly, "ye must just contrive to manage your telltale eyes and your fretsome tongue until the bonny roses come again. 'Tis not so long that ye must glower at the fire! With the dear Leddy Rose, 'tis best to let this great disease of love creep insidiously into her over-crowded heart without the patient at all suspectin'. Then with the grace of God it may grow and grow until at last it has become quite incurable. Mark ye, Larry, if ye wake the lass up in the early stages, she will not rest until she is quite cured and maybe immune! And please God, laddie, I would not have ye find any thorn to your pretty rose, as I've told ye before."

Thus ran the Doctor's quaint medical metaphor; and Larry disciplined eyes and tongue in loyal deference to his uncle's will. Only his cello sang at times what his lips unwillingly withheld, crooning forth a subtle courtship of its own.

Keenly alive to the congenial atmosphere of the old Weston house, with its many rooms and its many wood-fires, Larry liked best to play in the firelight when, with the ruddy leap and crack of the blazing log, the shadows about

the old-fashioned music room twisted and changed in contour and fled at last in a panic, only to cluster somberly again in the corners when the fire died down. Wind and rain and sleet might tap with ghostly ice-fingers at the old checkerboard windows; gnarled, ice-hung branches might brush eerily against the glass in wistful envy of the ruddy warmth it framed; but the rapt musicians in the old room played on, oblivious alike to the wind and the dying fire, the warm brown eyes of the tireless player at the piano fixed thoughtfully upon the portrait of Great-Aunt Felicia and her harp, dimly visible on the wall before her; the somber eyes of the cellist fixed unwaveringly upon the fire-rimmed figure of the girl who with an inborn sense of the artistic, clung to a pretty custom of wearing the softer gowns of the summer through the indoor hours of the winter. Even the ubiquitous fire-elves caught the winsome charm of this fair-haired, brown-eyed player, for they clustered thickly about her skirts and hair in a dancing retinue which to a casual watcher might have seemed but the restless shadows of the fire.

Beethoven and Wagner lived and lived again in this quiet, firelit room, the melodic envoys of many a revelation that would have brought the

swift color to Rose's cheek had she but understood the language of Larry's skillful bow. And many a song of the olden day sighed plaintively from the strings its sympathy for this rebellious lover of another day.

"Sweet and Low," "In the Gloaming," "Love's Old Sweet Song," and "Ben Bolt," "Alice, Where Art Thou?" and "Larboard Watch, Ahoy!" one by one these old favorites enveloped the music room with an atmosphere of old-time romance of which Mother Rose herself was the fitting heart and inspiration.

It was the older songs that Rose liked best, playing them with an impersonal tenderness that Larry could not understand. It piqued him that Rose did not feel the irresistible surge of depression which their music awoke in him. And even while he sighed, Rose turned many a time from the old piano to the fire with a cheerful laugh.

"What improvident musicians we are, Larry! See, the fire is quite down to embers. And how very solemn you are to-night!"

Then Larry would straightway bustle about the fireplace as if the fire were his only thought, adding another white birch log, prodding the lazy embers from a slumbrous glow into momentary sparks of wakefulness and flushing hotly if

the gown or hair of his deft assistant brushed ever so lightly against his hands.

And the fire-elves hibernating in the birch log burst gleefully forth to congregate thickly in the chimney and — alas! — to gossip.

“What manner of girl anyway is this Mother Rose,” they demanded indignantly, “that these wonderful old love songs do not open her eyes? Here is our handsome young Highland friend, Black-Hair-and-Blue-Eyes, as Friend Flameo there calls him, fairly sighing his heart out for her through his cello in a most romantic atmosphere of firelight, and still she does not understand! Why, Great Fire-snakes! have we not heard him play the ‘Moonlight Sonata’ until the veriest Philistine must guess his meaning?” And Spark, a visiting elf from the Doctor’s chimney, offered an explanation with a malicious imitation of the Doctor’s own accent.

“Remember,” said he with a boisterous chuckle, “the Leddy Rose is verra different from all others!”

Rarely until these firelit hours with Larry had Rose found time to indulge her natural aptitude for music, but now an early girlhood skill came readily back to her ever-quick and dexterous fingers. As this unforgettable winter

crept slowly on, Larry watched the quiet player at the old piano with a new interest. Quick and retentive of memory, with but occasional recourse to the printed page before her, dimly visible in the fire-glow, Rose played as she lived, with a sympathy so warm and true that one never doubted its sincerity. Tender and tranquil the melody might be, or a vari-colored sparkle of *agitato*, but underlying it all Larry always fancied he caught the eternal croon of the girl's unfailing altruism.

What wonder then that the string quartette soon caught the charm and sympathy of her music and begged an occasional memorable evening with this friendly and willing accompanist? But the occasions were few. The Doctor, for reasons of his own, discouraged them.

Whenever the song of Larry's cello swept eloquently out from the music room, a tacit understanding among King Rodney's daughters left the absorbed players free from any exuberant invasion.

Oh, blind and selfless Mother Rose!

Presently even King Rodney sensed the discriminating attitude of the others and grew elaborately stealthy when the cello played in the music room, but Nemesis had decreed that

Rodney should always upset clatterable objects when he wished to avoid attention and wait upon himself, and that Rose's quick ears should always catch the clatter and help the protesting caliph to the finding of his own.

Only the Doctor was permitted to break the friendly ruling of the household. There were nights when he popped in unexpectedly, medicine case in hand, and demanded the performance of "Robin Adair," "The Bluebells of Scotland," "Comin' Through the Rye," and "Annie Laurie." And there was still another favorite, an old forgotten firelight song which the Doctor found so harmonious with the time and place that he needs must quote it softly under his breath with many an approving look about him and many a nod of his grizzled head as if this delightful atmosphere were quite of his own making.

*"The shadows lie across the dim old room,  
The firelight glows and fades into the gloom.*

"Laddie," he began wistfully one night over his midnight coffee at the Hame, "ye dinna mind your old uncle poppin' in so unexpected upon your musical sweetheartin' with the dear Leddy Rose, eh? I just canna seem to get

old Peggy by the place with the firelight reflections on the windows and all your music soundin' so clear through the winter air. Why, Larry, with yourself a-bowin' away so earnest on the big fiddle and lookin' so verra like a lover in a book of romance, and the dear Leddy Rose at the old piano with the bright firelight upon her pretty sunny hair and that trailin' gown which just makes my old noddle think of driftin' apple blossoms, 'tis such a picture as a man canna verra well forget. The two of ye, I just must tell ye, lad, look verra well together, verra well indeed!" And enormous satisfaction lurked in the final phrase.

Larry, scanning the deep shadows of the office with the fire's fitful unveiling of the Doctor's fads and fancies, thought the old-fashioned room as kindly as its owner and felt his heart surge with renewed loyalty to this quaint, warm-hearted, boyish Scot who was father and uncle and friend to him in one.

"Laddie," cautioned the Doctor one other night, "ye must not play again as ye have played to-night until your year is quite up. Guid faith, I canna forget it!" And the Doctor stared musingly into the fire as if he heard again the eloquent crescendo of his nephew's cello, though the only sounds about

were the crackle of the log and the sough of the wind in the chimney.

Very frank these quaint and kindly comments upon his nephew's odd courtship, but Larry always understood, and the dancing, inquisitive elves of the firelight caught many a stinging arraignment of the self-centered Rodney, and many a panegyric of busy Mother Rose, but they fled chuckling up the chimney and held their peace like the wise and cheery little elves they were.

So, midnights, the Doctor lingered in his office over his coffee and his tattered book of Burns, ever alert for the homing steps of his nephew. And his welcome was always the same:

"Well, dear lad, have ye been coortin' the Leddy Rose?"

## Chapter 6

### *The Doctor's Christmas*

FROST-WHITE, winter swept over Auburnia, unleashing the wings of a freezing gale. December came ermine clad, draping the Doctor's shivering elms in tippets of snow; and chill twilights Peggy plodded up the driveway under a tossing lace-wing of branches, feathery and white.

In the murk shadows of the early twilight, there was much that the Doctor loved. Lights were brighter, he fancied, when they twinkled cheerily through snow and snapping cold; and the dusk, shrouding branches black against the winter sunset, somehow invested every dwelling with inferential coziness and cheer.

Winter twilights, too, brought with them those colorful hours in Ben's workroom when, armed with the inevitable bundle of "troosers," the Doctor might drop in and smoke one of his atrocious cigars in the smoky glare of the little tailor's kerosene lamp, watching with eyes a-twinkle while Ben fell fiercely upon his little stove and raked and shook and abused it

generally to increase its already generous halo of cheer, thereafter beaming and bustling and ironing and stitching and talking, always talking, to the Doctor's keen enjoyment, of the mosques and minarets of far off Beirut and of the wonderful silence and star-glitter of the mystic desert.

Then — rare privilege of the chilling winter! — the Doctor might indulge his fondness for the great, old-fashioned kitchen of the Hame, entering by the back door with a mighty stamping of snow from his feet and with nose and cheeks red with cold beneath the ragged fur cap which quite evidently was of a class with the piebald Peggy and his carpet slippers, retained in active service too long and decidedly unprofessional.

What cheerful fire-shadows danced then upon the floor before the barred grate, and how delightedly the Doctor loitered over Scotch Flora's shining stove, hands aspread to the welcome warmth, ear alive to the homely singing of the kettle, and tongue invariably primed with a quotation or so for Jamie and Flora.

Sometimes it was a sonorous:

*“ Loud blaw the frosty breezes,  
The snaws the mountains cover.*

"What would ye be cookin' in the great pot, Flora, lass, pesterin' a hungry man with such an odor?"

And sometimes this:

*"The wintry west extends his blast,  
And hail and rain does blaw;  
Or the stormy north sends driving forth  
The blinding sleet and snaw!"*

"Ye have given Peggy and Ginger guid war-r-r-m beds, eh, Jamie? 'Tis a mortal bad night."

Oftenest of all, however, came his favorite:

*"While winds frae aff Ben Lomond blaw,  
And bar the doors wi' drivin snaw,  
And hing us owre the ingle,  
I set me down to pass the time,  
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,  
In hamely, westlin jingle."*

A blizzard trumpeted the advent of the Christmas week, piling its ermine far and wide with the silvering bite of a freezing wind, and in the early twilight of the Christmas eve the Doctor came riding home atop a sleigh of holly and mistletoe, leaving a trail of crimson berries along the snowy road behind him.

Bob and Jean helped him hang the Hame with holly, and presently the tireless Doctor once more donned his ragged fur cap and great coat for an errand no one dared to question.

“Ye’ve not forgot anything, eh, Jamie, lad?” he questioned, as the old Scotchman hovered about the sleigh after numberless trips to and from the house. Jamie’s answer was a little odd.

“God speed ye, Roderick Glenmuir, ye’re a guid man!”

Now, oddly enough, as the Doctor drove off his good-humor seemed to disappear. He fell to glowering fiercely from beneath his bushy eyebrows and looking so grim with his chin stuck out and his shoulders squared that the bravest of men would not have halted him. Therefore no curious idler questioned his destination or commented upon his bulging pockets and the eccentric bundles in his sleigh, though many a friendly voice called a Christmas greeting and many a pair of eyes followed him with a twinkle of understanding. . . . And many a weariful little mother of poverty rained blessings that Christmas Eve upon a mysterious Christmas saint whose mare was as old as his cap was ragged.

From the window Jean watched him drive

away, her eyes gentle. Twisting a bit of holly absently about in her fingers, she gave a little cry.

"I always forget," she said, "that anything so Christmasy as holly may still have thorns —"

Bob sighed.

"Jeannie," he asked unexpectedly, "why won't you marry me?"

Jean's good-humored laugh was far too kindly to offend.

"Given the most unromantic setting and a group of utterly prosaic circumstances," she commented drolly, "and I may always depend upon you for a proposal, Bob. Once when your canoe upset, once when I sat perched upon the limb of a tree while you killed a snake, once —"

"Enough! It's a true bill. And now a holly thorn. So we still split on that infernal rock of philosophy, Jean?"

"I thought we threshed that all out the other night."

"Hum!" Bob cleared his throat. "Yes, we did. I think you told me I was far too tranquil and philosophical to have any spirit, didn't you? We were speaking of my attitude toward Gunnigan."

"Oh, no, no, no, Bob!" protested Jean,

coloring. "I didn't put it just that way, I'm sure."

"Yes," nodded Bob. "You pointed out that I had deadened too much of the primitive man with mental poultices of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Remember?"

"I said," admitted Jean, "that you were not sufficiently elemental. What can you expect of a man," she added humorously, "who pores over Herbert Spencer and Schopenhauer and Kant for amusement! You smother all the fire of your brain with the dry dust of philosophy."

Bob had a mind to remain silent at this but the mooted Spencer was an idol.

"You'll not find a finer thing," he urged, "than Spencer's 'Philosophy of the Unknowable'!"

"Rank agnosticism!" accused Jean, her eyes merry. "And your pessimistic Schopenhauer is a most unattractive misogynist."

"Hum!" said Bob, rubbing his chin, but the light of battle was slowly kindling in his lazy eyes.

"And what," persisted Jean, "what *can* you expect of a man who smiles and shrugs over Reddy Gunnigan's editorial insults, and laughs—mind you—laughs when he's writing the answers?"

"Mere puerilities," disdained Bob. "Your true philosopher is above 'em. Larry, I imagine, is a sort of elemental person in his heart —"

"Yes," nodded Jean instantly, "Larry's not much of a philosopher. Larry would, I think, love very greatly and suffer very greatly too."

"And a philosopher of course never loves very greatly and therefore never suffers!"

Jean stared, conscious of a new note in the lazy quiet of his voice, but Bob was carefully packing tobacco into the huge bowl of his pipe and the girl watched him in puzzled silence.

"Why, don't you see, Bob," she urged, laying an impulsive hand upon his arm, "that by unreasonably tempering primitive instincts you impair your capacity for soaring to the heights or descending into the depths?"

"Ye-es," said Bob. With sudden gentleness his hand closed tightly over the one upon his arm and raising it to his lips, he kissed it.

"And you, Jeannie?"

"Oh, Bob," said the girl, "I'm a wild Highlander in my heart, like Larry, and I must be loved very greatly or not at all!" And Bob fancied her eyes glowed like dark-rimmed topazes.

"And you still think I can't give you that love?"

“Let’s not talk of it any more, Bob! I’m so very fond of you, and yet —”

With a sudden squaring of his broad shoulders, Bob smiled. It was a smile that cost him something of a struggle, but fancying it born of his ever-present philosophy, Jean shrugged and turned away; then meeting his eyes, she too smiled, readily good-humored.

“Always friends, though, Jeannie?”

“Always friends!”

And shaking hands these two renewed a childhood pledge of friendship.

With the midnight echo of the Christmas bells, came the first white feather of the tranquil Christmas snow. No wind-lashed blizzard this time, only a gentle, kindly feathering of the Christmas world with “a silence deep and white.” An old-fashioned Christmas! So the doctor declared it from his window Christmas morning and so indeed it was from the first dawn-glimmer of the ragged ermine on the fences to the snow-sheen of the Christmas moon.

The holiday-loving Doctor gathered his friends about him over a blazing Yule log Christmas night.

Mildly the Christmas moon rose over Auburnia, over the Hame o’ Roses and the Doctor’s elms and after a peep at its winter

glory, Doctor Roderick beckoned Larry to his side.

"Larry," he exclaimed earnestly in an undertone, "why dinna ye take the dear Leddy Rose out sleighin', eh, laddie? Jamie will put Peggy to the cutter for ye. 'Tis such a mild night with the great moon and the snow, and when ye know well enough ye just canna freeze, Peggy is as guid a sweetheartin' horse as ye would find anywhere." And as Larry was dutiful and respectful to his uncle in all things, so was he dutiful and respectful in this.

Now whether the all-pervasive Christmas spirit crept into Peggy's legs or whether the hand upon the reins was perhaps not quite so indulgent as the Doctor's, who can tell? Certainly the old mare left the driveway in a tranquil trot that was swift enough for Larry, and Rose, accustomed to old Molly's amble, protested drolly at their speed.

On and on they sped under the white sheen of the winter moon and Larry, watching the winsome profile of his Leddy Rose above the dark line of her furs, felt the year of silent wooing to which the Doctor had bound him weigh most heavily upon his patience.

With a sigh he rummaged for his tobacco and a pipe.

"A sigh, Larry, on Christmas night!" exclaimed Rose, and Larry was keenly conscious of the thrill that always surged over him when she spoke his name. Still, as he well knew, there was nothing of coquetry in it. It was but a winsome bit of the girl's alluring informality.

"Indigestion!" countered Larry, and Rose with her tranquil laugh leaned over and took the reins.

"Let me drive while you smoke," she suggested, swiftly mindful for his comfort, and with the slacking of the reins, Peggy became conscious of the beauty of the landscape and paused with a blink to enjoy it.

"So," commented Larry, "so ye were verra well pleased with your wee Christmas giftie, eh, Leddy Rose?"

"So much so that I've brought it with me to-night." Rose drew from her muff a tiny volume of "Afghan Love Songs" bound in tooled and inlaid levant. "How like the Doctor you are at times, Larry! Just now when you spoke, I could have fancied him beside me."

"I doubt if you could pay me a greater compliment."

"And how much you two admire each other!" Rose smiled. "Why, just a while ago I said

something similar to the Doctor — of how very like you he must have been in his youth — and he was more than delighted. Declared it was quite the most agreeable and flattering compliment he'd had in many a day!"

"Hum!" said Larry doubtfully, but under Rose's serene guidance Peggy was growing somewhat drowsy, and knocking the ashes from his pipe Larry gladly turned his attention to the reins.

With Mother Rose, to read once was to remember much. Now she fingered the book which Larry had given her and began to quote:

*"Your two large eyes are like the stars of  
Heaven;*

*Your white face is like the throne of Shah  
Jahan:*

*Your two tender, delicate arms are like the  
blades of Iran*

*And your slender body is like the standard of  
Solomon.*

*My life for you! Do not cry.*

*Dear, dear child! a flower in your hat!*

*It shines like a sprig of gold!*

"You read it here perhaps? It is an Afghan

mother's song to her child. 'My life for you!' How like a mother! Weird and quaint and wild but still the barbaric chant of a mother-heart and therefore beautiful. After all, a mother is a mother the world over, be she wild Afghan or not."

"Hum!" said Larry. He was not feeling strongly interested in Afghan mother-love and fretted at the trend of Rose's interest. "But the love songs?"

"There is a wonderful atmosphere and a wonderful rhythm. One hears the wild songs, the clank and glitter of the Afghan bazaar in a land of mosques and pomegranates, of dervishes and wild kharo birds but —"

"You read those I marked?"

"Yes. 'Strike my head, plunder my goods, but let me see the eyes of the one I love and I will give my blood!'" she quoted. "That was one?"

"Yes."

*"She has sugar on her lips, she has pearls for her teeth:*

*All this she has, my beloved one; I am wounded in my heart,*

*And therefore I am a beggar that cries, low-low!*

“That was another. Somehow all you marked, Larry, sound the same note: the wilder, the more barbaric side of love. I do not like that side so well. They are—what shall I call them?—too elemental. Yes, that’s it; too elemental, all of them!”

Larry tightened the reins.

“I very much fear,” he said ruefully, “that I am a bit elemental myself. With me, they strike a kindred chord.”

The Christmas elves abroad that night must have chuckled at the very irony of it all; Jean crying out for the elemental in the love that lay at her feet; gentle Mother Rose shrinking back in dismay at the very breath of it.

## Chapter 7

### *Henchmen*

SO THE snail-like winter went creeping on and in the midst of it all, Jerry Colson, the lean and gloomy young artist of the wind trio, very nearly precipitated Larry's forbidden declaration months before its schedule by the unexpected production of a wonderful painting of the Leddy Rose, over which, with Rose's good-humored connivance, he had been working in deepest secrecy.

Now it is a most regrettable fact that the Doctor's indiscreet tongue had somehow contrived to let out all about Larry's promised year of silence to the lads of the Music Box and the Cave.

"And verra necessary it was, too," the Doctor had told himself in defense of the indiscretion, "for it has just kept me awake o' nights plannin' to keep the daffy lads from all fallin' head over kerturby in love with Leddy Rose themselves. I could see it comin'. And I winna have my Larry's wooin' complicated by a flock o' rivals!"

So it was that upon the disastrous completion

of Jerry's painting, the artist was haled before the Doctor late one night by an outraged committee of five from the two apartments.

It was a ludicrous delegation.

"Just look at him over there!" exclaimed Norman Ames with a scathing wave of his hand to where Jerry sat plunged in gloom. "Just look at him! Rank old meddler!"

"Guid faith!" the Doctor rose from his chair and stared aghast at the delegation, "just what has the lad been doin', Norman, that ye feel called upon to be so mortal tragic?"

There was a prompt and grumbling chorus of explanation, quite unintelligible, during which Jerry shrugged disgustedly and the Doctor looked helplessly from one to the other. Then Roger Brett's deep voice boomed above the others:

"Up and paints a picture of Rose," he was saying, "in old-fashioned high-heeled slippers and a wonderful old brocade gown they've been hoarding up in the Weston attic since the days of the ark, one of her Great-Aunt Felicia's —"

"Hear — hear the civil engineer!" jeered Jerry.

With a scathing look at the prisoner Grant Dallinger took the burden of explanation upon himself.

"Paints her playing Great-Aunt Felicia's harp, too!" he explained witheringly.

"Corking good work, though!" broke in Quin Courtney, with a quick sparkle of his eyes. "Corking! And *like* her? Well, say, he's even caught that odd cheeriness that seems to light up Rose's face when she isn't smiling! All dangerous enough in itself, but what does this misguided artist of ours do —"

"God bless my soul!" interposed the bewildered Doctor. "What would be the cause then of all this disgrace and gloom into which the five of ye have plunged poor Jerry? Surely it canna be that ye've captured the poor lad and dragged him here all for paintin' such a charmin' picture of the dear Leddy Rose?"

"Exactly!" put in Jerry huffily. "What in creation's wrong with poor Jerry anyway? Nothing at all. Oh, no! Nothing at all. Only the eternal prey of Fate, the scorn of Nemesis! Ask Uncle Shad whose breakfast herring the partnership cat always swipes. Ask him whose sock is always missing when the wash comes home. Always Jerry, puffball of the Wind of Fate!"

"Oh, dry up, Jerry!" advised Grant Dalinger. "You gave us all that on the way here."

"Rank old meddler!" sputtered Norman

again, looking very fat and indignant. "What, sir, does this attenuated artist of ours do, this puffball of the Wind of Fate, this long, lean, black-eyed, saturnine Jerry here, but keep the painting a secret —"

"And then to-night," supplemented Lloyd Ridgely, "invites us all over to the studio and then and there melodramatically drops a curtain he'd made himself — and presents the picture to Larry as a surprise. Mind you, without a word of warning, and with us all around!"

"Am I ever alone?" demanded Jerry elaborately. "Do I ever have a peaceful minute to myself? Didn't Nemesis decree that you'd all cling to me like barnacles to a ship? Huh!"

"And Larry," exploded Norman, "Larry, he turned red and then white and then red again and he looked at the picture of Rose and stammered something. Anybody with an eye for romance —"

"You're too fat to be romantic," put in the prisoner with unnecessary impudence.

"Anybody," repeated Norman coldly, "with an eye for romance could see he was upset. Then, after he'd been mighty civil and decent to Jerry for all his lunacy, as soon as he could, he —"

"Slipped away!" interposed Roger, pro-

ducing a handful of fat black cigars and distributing them like so many complimentary tickets. "Slipped away, as our fat romanticist there would say, into the darksome night."

"Slipped away!" nodded Norman, making the most of this romantic climax. "And you're no sylph yourself, Roger! And where does he slip to? Don't *I* suspect right away? That painting of Rose was too unexpected. No doubt about it, it *is* a peach! And it was too much for him. Larry, sir, headed straight for the Westons, all primed to break that year of silence! But I stalked him," went on Norman darkly. "I bolted out and stalked him, slinking along behind him with my hat down over my eyes to avoid detection. And then," Norman's voice was charged with exasperation, "what must Jerry do but brazenly duck his head out of the Cave window and whistle a fool burglar march for me to go by. Naturally Larry turned around—and I had to duck into a doorway. Mighty thankful I was, however, after I'd hidden behind a tree on the Weston lawn, to hear Tavia say that Rose was out sleighing with her father. It saved the day, though to be sure," Norman added with a terrible glance at Jerry, "I would have stopped him at any cost if Rose *had* been there, after Jerry messing things so."

Now whether poor Larry's intention had been to break his year of silence or whether he had merely sought to escape from the disturbing battery of eyes, the excited Doctor could not decide, but certainly it pleased the romance-loving Norman to think he had in a measure guarded the citadel of silence, and therefore the Doctor patted him on the back and called him a "guid lad!"

"But 'twas not so verra discreet, Jerry, lad!" opined the Doctor kindly, "to spring such a rare and lovely likeness of his leddy upon him so verra unexpected and with ye all around!"

Jerry merely sniffed and refused to express any decent repentance. So, presently, over an enormous company pot of coffee, the Doctor and his henchmen foregathered about the office fire in an exhaustive discussion of Jerry's failings.

"Hist!" said the Doctor darkly. "A step! Guid faith, 'tis Larry himself. Not a word, mind ye, of the year of silence. I would not for the world have Larry know I had been gabbin' away so loose to any of ye!"

Straightway Norman, with his passion for intrigue, was all for assembling his party under the table until Larry had departed, but this was instantly voted down by the Doctor, who fore-

saw its probable results. When at last Larry entered, considerably astonished at the sight of the midnight conference, it was a line of guilty faces that greeted him, and the Doctor purposely created a great to-do about the empty coffee pot to distract his nephew's attention.

Thus the crisis in Larry's courtship was neatly tidied over, but Jerry was under strict surveillance for many a day thereafter, to his intense disgust.

"And almost before ye could make a crambo-clink about it," as the Doctor put it, "the summer was upon ye!"

Lilacs purpled in the gardens; wistaria cascaded over the roof of the Weston barn; the Doctor's elms were freshly caparisoned in the tender green of early summer; and once more the bonny roses were nodding bright heads to the Hame in a colorful halo of cheer. With them came a vast army of rose-bugs, recruited largely it appeared from scarabæoid crooks and bandits, and Jamie began his annual tobogganing perditionward under the disapproving gaze of Flora. And at the zenith of the roses' empery, came, per honored custom, the Doctor's rose-party.

Once more Jamie appeared at sunset with his plea for a family inspection of the Glenmuir

roses; once more, as ever, the roses were a sight for "sair e'en" with the sunset light upon them, and Jamie did not think that any year could be "so guid for the flowers."

So, at last, to the relief of the Music Box and the Cave, and most of all poor Jerry, who had been the victim of a most offensive system of espionage, Larry's year of silence came to an end. It was the Doctor himself who absolved his nephew in the week following the rose-party.

"And now, Larry, lad, God speed ye! Your poor old uncle has been more than meddlesome and gossipy with his clackin' tongue and his unprofessional ways, and I dinna doubt he has pestered ye a deal, but dinna forget, laddie, he has your welfare verra close to his heart!"

## Chapter 8

*In which Larry finds the thorn*

WITH the coming of summer many a strolling Auburnian saw the family artist digging in the Weston gardens. Many a strolling Auburnian grudgingly admitted that in his broad garden hat, white flannels and tennis shoes, King Rodney looked distractingly handsome and busy and picturesque, and that with all his idiosyncrasies the man contrived to make the best of his ancient house and grounds, instilling into the welter of old-fashioned flowers without and the faded furnishings within, a real air of distinction and beauty. But few saw the busy gardener, in cotton gloves and a pink sun-bonnet, who was astir with the chattering robins in the cherry orchard; and but few knew that the sure color touch apparent everywhere, from the brightly-flowered chintz in the bedrooms, veiling unlovely, threadbare gaps, to the tiger lilies about the barn, was the touch of Mother Rose.

But the greatest tribute to the girl's delicate artistry lay behind a yellow-flowered hedge of

currants, where a secluded water-garden sloped gently from a moss-rimmed spring upon a wooded knoll to the windows of the eastern wing. Tricked into picturesque service, the clear waters of the spring slipped over mossy rocks first to one pool and then another, cascading musically where the drop from pool to pool was deep, slipping sleepily along when the fall was slight, but ever moving onward and downward to the hidden drain.

Rose's garden indeed! Every pool, fringed in moss and rock fern, from which the spires of rush and flag and lily nodded, mirrored a tribute to the girl's deft fingers. Yellow lotus floated drowsily upon the deeper pools; water lilies opened waxen sails to the morning sun and furled them with the evening dusk to spars of emerald; and in the ragged pickerel weed along the shores flashed a hoard of silver-scaled and hungry fish and, at times, a solemn frog. Water hyacinths built up minarets of violet from mosques of leafy green; water snowflakes spangled the surface of the shallow pools with a milk-white drift of stars, and over an occasional sleepy patch of water aquatic poppies hung their yellow elf-lanterns above a shining wilderness of leaves.

Such was Mother Rose's water-garden, its

quiet pools purling darkly beneath an occasional willow, its quiet walks a sanctuary for the favored few.

Now there was one favorite willow, showering above the water like a green mantilla, beneath which Mother Rose was wont to spend an hour or so with the family darning, and here on an afternoon that was heavy with the scent of water lilies, she laid aside her basket of sewing to feed once more the tiny fish flashing silver among the pickerel weed at her feet. A chirping caucus of birds settled fearlessly around her, hopping about with a confidence born of experience, and, smiling, Rose sprinkled the ground about her thick with crumbs and sat motionless that she might not disturb them. It was a scene so characteristic of Rose and her forethought that a visitor paused by the currant hedge to enjoy it. Set in the heart of this cool green pastel of tree and water, with the birds clustering about her and the willow moving drowsily above her head, the quiet figure in her gown of green epitomized the charm of the afternoon.

"Why, Larry!" exclaimed Rose in surprise as presently he swung back the gate. "Didn't you go to the Doctor's picnic?"

"No," said Larry, somewhat embarrassed.

"No, I didn't. How very like a tree dryad you look to-day, Rose. And what a wonderfully cool-looking, becoming green you've chosen to wear on this very hot afternoon."

"It's my bird dress!" nodded Rose, resuming her sewing. "Just a queer fancy, Larry. I like to wear it here in the water-garden. Somehow the birds seem to flock about me more readily when I'm wearing green like the trees and all the rest of their pleasant friends."

"Do I clash with the landscape?"

"By no means! . . . How very handsome you're looking to-day, Larry," added the girl with a flash of bewitching candor. "You and Quin have started a perfect epidemic of white flannels among the callow youth of Auburnia!"

Now Rose was ever so pleasant and sincere with her praise, and paradoxical as it may seem, so frankly impersonal, that constraint rarely lingered. So Larry, stretched comfortably upon the grass beside her with his head resting lazily upon his hand, smiled at her over the workbasket and drolly saluted his thanks.

"And how very blue your eyes are! Somewhere among your Highland ancestors, Larry, I'm sure there must have been a great, merry, rollicking Irishman with those wonderful, Irish-

blue eyes that some phrase-coining novelist has called 'smut-rimmed'!"

"Pleasant simile! With an inferential need of soap and water." And Larry casually aimed a pebble at a huge toad blinking from some purple saxafrage among the rocks.

"Larry!" protested Rose. "It's Sir Amos!"

"Sir Amos!" exclaimed Larry aghast. "Well, 'pon my word, Sir Amos!"

"To be sure. He polices the water-garden and attends in his own way to any disreputable bug-person who betrays a tendency to colonize among the rock foliage. He's a very valuable adjunct to our comfort, I assure you."

"But he's not at all 'andsome!" objected Larry and Rose bridled.

"Must everything match your very good looking Highness?" she demanded. "I like him all the better for his physical limitations. Besides, he's a philosopher, and I'm very partial to philosophers!"

"I'm going to acquire a hump and a limp," Larry assured her. "They're very definite assets. And I *wish* I were a philosopher!"

Rose glanced at him curiously, but meeting his eyes she colored slightly and returned to her darning. Whereupon Larry fell busily to packing tobacco into his pipe and whistling softly to

himself. A silence fell between them, broken at last by Rose.

"The water arum is ablaze with berries," she said, clipping a straggling thread. "See, Larry, over there by the soggy edge of the pool. How very red the berries are! And yesterday Grant brought me such a lot of new plants. Water shield and white water crowfoot and a spearwort that's just like a buttercup. And Jerry's pledged himself to forage every flower-pond he finds to-day for water fern. How very like the Doctor to wheedle the Music Box and the Cave and my busy sisters into a picnic!"

Larry laughed.

"I breakfasted at the Hame this morning," he said, "and Aunt Agnes told me the Doctor was up at sunrise helping Flora pack the hamper, and growing a bit fretful because she and Jean were not quite so keen upon an early rising."

"But you, Larry! How very disappointed he must have been when he found you weren't going."

"Hum!" said Larry relighting his pipe. "Yes, I suppose — to be sure he was. Naturally." But he did not venture the singular fact that his own home-staying had been the result of a midnight conference with the Doctor himself.

"Surely you could have managed to go somehow. The Doctor sets such great store by your presence."

"You didn't go," said Larry, and Rose stared, the hot color sweeping in a lovely tide to the very line of her hair. For by his tone this frank visitor who was startlingly unlike the Larry of the winter, had overstepped the magic ring of friendship in which his winsome Leddy Rose had fancied herself entrenched. So once more a silence of purling water and chirping birds settled over the water-garden and once more it was Rose who, with her ready self-possession, put an end to constraint. Rummaging about in her workbasket she brought to light a book.

"See, Larry," she smiled, "how much I value your Christmas gift. It is always here in the basket where I may easily lay my hands upon it."

"And the elemental still jars?"

"Yes. But like everything else in life there is much to counteract the jars."

Flushing a little, Larry took the book and opened it quite at random.

"'It is due that I should be your servant,'" he read, an oddly grave note in his quiet voice, "'Have a thought for me, my soul, ever and

ever. Evening and morning I lie at thy door; I am the first of thy lovers, low, low!’” and with a flash of resolution in his eyes, Larry turned to the busy worker beside him. “Oh, Rose, dear,” he said gently, “what’s the use of it all, I wonder, this diffidence of mine. See, it’s all written for me here in the song of the Afghan lover!”

“Larry!” Rose’s voice was tragic and her color flamed again and left her very white. “Oh, Larry!”

Still, for all the keen reproach in the girl’s voice there was a startled compassion in her eyes that chilled Larry with foreboding. Was it Mother Rose’s gentle unwillingness to hurt by so much as a word, that glimmered darkly in her warm, brown eyes? After all, with the firelit memories of the winter, this revelation should not have startled her so, quaintly apart from womankind though she was, unless — unless —

“Surely you must have guessed, Rose,” he said a little bitterly. “All winter I have lived with the thought of it. The firelit nights in the music room, those wonderful old love songs we played together, even this little book —”

“Oh, no, no, no, Larry!” broke in Rose in genuine distress. “I — I did not know. Truly! It was all so pleasant — so pleasant and

friendly." Her voice quivered. "Oh, Larry, Larry, I am so sorry! Believe me, I did not dream. I would not have played those old songs with you so often if I had guessed." And Leddy Rose's face went suddenly down upon her hands, and Larry with a dawning sense of shipwreck stared miserably across the drowsy water lilies at the sunset.

Gentle Leddy Rose inflicting pain upon a cherished friend!

"Larry," she said wistfully, "you have been such a good friend to me! And I have valued our hours of companionship so much! Must we spoil it all? Oh, Larry," quick tragedy in her voice again, "could you not see that marriage is not for such as I?"

"No," said Larry. "Nor do I see that — even now."

Rose sighed and Larry, looking up, saw that the gravity of her eyes was wonderfully sweet and sympathetic but inexorable. Leaning forward he caught the girl's hands within his own.

"Oh, Rose, Rose!" he pleaded. "Have the firelit memories then meant nothing to you? Is there after all no love at all in your heart for me?"

"Larry, I do not know." Quick tears beaded Rose's lashes and once more the troubled brown

eyes warmed to compassionate velvet. "The thought of it all is so new — so new and confusing. You were such a kindly brother, so strong and helpful and cheering. I — I can not let you go away from me so hurt. If only I had known and had warned you. Perhaps I was blind because I have known so surely that marriage is not for me, that I too must be a soldier on the line of battle, cheerfully sacrificing the eternal destiny of woman even as the brave little soldier who bore me is sacrificing all that is dear to her, consecrating my life and my pittance of cheer to my mother's home."

"You do not know whether or not you love me?"

"No —"

"If you loved me," said Larry very quietly, "I think you would know. It would be inevitable."

"Larry, I can not let myself love you!" countered Rose in real distress. "I must guard my heart against you and fight it all away. Oh, there is so much that I must try to make clear to you! You and your pleasant friends have been welcomed into the very heart of my home life this winter. Surely, surely you must realize how abnormal it is despite its happiness!"

"Yes. And each one of us has silently given

your mother and her tireless helper no small measure of reverence and respect."

"I know! I don't wonder the Doctor is so proud of his lads. Kindly, courteous gentlemen, all of them! I—I don't know what you may think of our way of living, Larry. We have learned to ignore criticism. After all, it is one of the things that have drawn us so close together and made us so clannish. But, Larry, there are inner facts—" Her voice faltered and Larry sat very silent staring at the ashes of his pipe.

"You would rather not tell me?"

"No, it is not that. It is all a bit pitiful and I must not give you a chance to misunderstand.

"Larry," she went on presently, unconscious of the color that surged darkly to his face at the touch of her hand upon his arm, "when my brave little mother first shouldered the bread-winning burden, we all thought that Father Weston's pictures would speedily win back for us something of the old-time prosperity. But the years have gone by and I—I know that my poor father is foredoomed to failure, to the eternal tragedy of unproductive ambition. Always he will keep on trying and failing, and always my dear little mother will go cheerfully back and forth—"

"But even now," broke in Larry, "there is Sonia doing wonderfully well. You don't mind my speaking of it? And Marcia and June all financially helpful. And the twins are with Sonia, aren't they? Surely your mother might well leave the burden of support to such competent daughters!"

"No, it is not possible. Seven years ago, when the money trouble came, there was a loan, a very big one, and the family syndicate is still working cheerfully to pay it."

"But once the loan is paid and your sisters — married?"

Rose shook her head, a sudden shadow in her eyes.

"No, no, Larry," she said gently. "Even that doesn't solve our problem here. If the girls all marry, the house will be quiet and somber and very lonely, and therefore I at least must stay to greet Mother Letty cheerfully at the close, and to mother baby Tavia. Only I can do it. Ah, Larry, don't you see? I can not desert my brave little mother on the firing line! It is I to whom she turns for everything; I to whom she entrusts the sacred keeping of her home, that it may still remain a home in the truest sense without her. I must keep that trust inviolate and stand by her to the end."

“But with marriage, with — with the cooperation of others! Surely — Rose —”

But Father Weston abhorred the very notion of subsisting upon the bounty of any stranger who might one day come into his sheltered life; he had said so. Very gently Rose spoke of this, too, coloring as she did so.

King Rodney's pride! Larry's eyes flashed. And his chin grew very grim.

“And every path of rescue leads to a cul-de-sac?” He had grown very white. “There is no way out?”

Rose bent her head.

“There is no way out. Oh, do you not see how pitiful it all is? Always my poor father is talking of how lavishly he will compensate Mother Letty when his art-ship comes in, of how the tired and busy days will be over for her forever. It is a tragedy he is living, Larry! After all, he is only a child reaching out helpless hands for a glittering bauble quite unattainable. No, no, I can not add any selfish shadows to this dear home life around me.”

“And have you no thought for me? Of the lonely hours ahead and my need of you?”

But the tearful brown eyes that met his were very brave and unfaltering and Larry read therein that there was no appeal by which he

might hope to shake her great resolve of consecration.

"Oh, Rose, dear," he groaned, "I can not give you up!"

"It — it is not that I do not think of your suffering," faltered Rose. "Oh, I am blaming myself so much for it all —" but caught in a wave of anger Larry wheeled upon her, seeking desperately to beat down her lofty courage.

"Can you not see that the brunt of it all comes upon you?" he stormed. "That your youth, your strength, your individuality, are going out in a cause unworthy of such heroism, the daily pandering to a man's sordid life of self-indulgence? Can you not see that your standards of love and duty are *too* heroic for human men and women, that fanatical altruism may injure its object, that you can be kindest to your father and mother by forcing a family revolution? Turn your logical bread-winner out into the world where he may learn self-dependence and chivalry and the primal male instinct of guarding his mate and his young! Pitiful, you said? Pitiful he is, indeed, utterly selfish, utterly indifferent to the sacrifices of his women-kind. You see it all, Rose, through the glamor of his magnetism, of your own warm affection and readiness to condone, while I —" he choked



*Maddened by the charm of her, Larry stormed and pleaded  
... As Rose listened, her face grew very white and her  
eyes blazed in an agony of pleading.*



and Rose shrank back against the willow, with cheeks ablaze and eyes of hurt astonishment.

And again, maddened by the charm of her, Larry stormed and pleaded, stung by the bitter consciousness that his lifeboat was drifting out to sea with King Rodney at the helm, that his winsome Leddy Rose of the moonlit garden, this girl of quaint gentleness and grace, was yet a creature of adamant too, fighting back his love and steeling her heart against him in mistaken loyalty to her kind.

And even as Rose watched and listened, her face grew very white and her eyes blazed in an agony of pleading.

"Oh, Larry, Larry, go!" she cried. "You are not yourself! You are making it very hard for me."

"I beg your pardon," he said. "You are right. I am not myself." With a sigh he bent and kissed her hand. "Brave little soldier! Rose, dear, a lovelorn sentry in the Legion of Love salutes his superior."

So at last he went.

A wave of dizziness swept over the girl and she clung to the trunk of the willow, trembling.

Introspection? When before had gentle Rose felt the need of it? Through the busy winter crowded with untiring forethought for others,

there had been no time. Through this unforgettable afternoon there had been ever paramount the thought of Larry's hurt and Larry's shipwreck, of the great harm her blindness had all unwittingly done a cherished friend; and Self had characteristically had its clamor stilled in the claims of another. But now, with Larry gone, with the vital consciousness that after all she was not merely a sympathetic spectator in this great drama of love, but an actor, a voice of rebellion awoke within, crying the truth, and a wave of crimson dyed her face and throat. With a sob she sank to her knees, crying pitifully. Fighting for self-control, with one arm held before her as if to ward off some terrible realization, Rose fell forward upon the grass, sobbing her heart out upon the altar of renunciation.

In the west the solar peacock who had spread his gorgeous fantail of flame and color to dazzle the world, suddenly found his splendor veiled by a squadron of storm clouds. A gray twilight heavy with the portent of summer rain, spread velvet wings over the quiet water-garden; water lilies one by one furled drowsy sails to sleep at anchor on the darkening pools; and a jagged scimitar of lightning, brilliantly jeweled, blazed above the tossing willow. From the clouds came

the quick patter of rain and Rose sat up, dazed and frightened, brushing the drops from her face in dismay.

"I — I must have fainted!" she thought with a shudder. "How dark and rainy and — lonely it has grown! The Doctor's picnickers will be drenched."

Thus with a faint sigh Rose once more took up her life of thought for others and went scurrying houseward through the rain to find in baby Tavia her initial test of courage.

"Mother Rose," came the plea from a hammock, "can't I maybe sit on your lap and hear God pour the rain through the trees? Is this the kind of rain what Lisbeth calls drippin's? And maybe, sister, you'll tell me again how poor, *poor* Mr. Bird came home that awful rainy night and found his nest all wet."

So, with a world of tossing, rain-swept branches before them, Sister Rose bravely told the story.

"And so," she finished, "there were the nests all wet and sodden and not at all homelike —"

"Well," broke in the practical Tavia, "why didn't the birds just build 'em with lids on, that's what *I* want to know!"

But Rose had not heard.

"Remember, sweetheart," she said very

gently, "always make the best of things as the birds did. And if your nest is not quite so pleasant as it was before, be patient and wait. In God's own time it will be dry again!"

With a quick movement of suspicion Tavia wiped something from her cheek and sat upright.

"Mother Rose," she whispered, slipping a warm and comforting little hand into her sister's, "your eyes are rainin' too, and they most always never do!"

But Rose only laughed forlornly and caught the child in her arms.

Out of the rain-swept dusk came presently the whirl of motors, of hoarse toots and voices grumbling about the rain. Two vehicles with flapping curtains rolled swiftly up the Weston driveway with the Doctor's car well on ahead and Jerry at the wheel of Grant's. Gloomily triumphant to-night, this puffball of the Wind of Fate, for having fallen into a pond in the search for water fern, he was the only one who did not mind the shower.

"Now, Agnes," came the Doctor's exasperated voice from the driveway, "ye can just see for yourself what a whig-ma-doodle figure I cut! 'Tis verra plain I wasn't built for white flannels. Didn't Bennie and I hobnob together

about the plannin' of this verra suit for my picnic so that I could go struttin' and a-peacockin' about easy and handsome in flannels like that rascal of a Larry! And would ye just look at me now! Jerry, I canna for the life of me see that ye're any more of a puffball of Fate than I am myself, if ye did tumble hiltie-skiltie into the pond of a sudden. I have shrunk beyond words just from rescuin' ye and drivin' home in the rain and, Agnes, would ye believe it, in spite of all the rest of my general shrinkage, my old knees have ballooned more than ye would deem possible. It's so mortal weird and uncanny I just canna understand it."

"And now, Tavia," said Mother Rose, "we must look up some dry things for the girls."

## Chapter 9

*In which Larry greets the dawn of another day  
as Black Donald did not*

LIKE a black-browed satyr came the storm again at midnight, sweeping with a roar of wind and rain to the north where a horseman galloped furiously along a lonely country road. For hours this rider of the night had lain face downward upon the wet ground beneath a tree, with his horse nosing plaintively at his rumpled clothes and hair.

So Black Donald had once ridden through the turmoil of a Highland night to take his life with the dawning of the morrow, but as yet the temptation to shed the mortal integument in the fashion of his ancestor had not brought its lure to Larry.

Bright above the mountains to the west snaked the satyr's bayonet of steel and, blinded, Rajah plunged with a frightened whinny into a forest by the road. Rain drummed overhead, showering through the branches; the satyr whistled eerily, mingling the din of thunder and the sweep of wind and rain into an awful music, but

though tree and bramble flung arms across his path, Larry brushed them fiercely aside, unconscious of his sodden clothes or the bleeding scratches on his hands and face.

No word of Rose's was ever lightly spoken. From her lofty resolve of consecration there was no recall and Larry knew that she would pass unflinching into the white fire of sacrifice like a martyr of old, calm, courageous and selfless to the end, wherefore he —

But now with a shock came vividly back to Larry the Highland legend of Black Donald's ride through the wind and rain. And Donald, the young chief of the family clan, had killed himself, for love, with the dawn.

He had found the one way out.

To the singing overtone of a Titan wind and the crack of falling branches, Rajah came at last to a steep and wooded slope and trampling heavily began to climb. The satyr's bayonet sent a tree crashing to its fate ahead and terrified, Rajah leaped and wheeled, snorting in terror. For an instant Larry saw the valley far below bright in a panoramic flash of revelation, then Rajah bolted down through the inky shadows of the mountainside in a panic, sliding and lurching fearfully along or flinging fiercely back upon his haunches.

So Larry came again into the valley. But the music of the storm was now a devil-chant of invitation.

Larry brushed the rain from his face and smiled. There was one way out . . . Black Donald had found it.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the library of the Music Box, Lloyd Ridgely, Larry's young assistant, consulted his watch and frowned. Its hands were pointing now to ten minutes of two.

"Odd!" he reflected uneasily. "It isn't like Larry to keep Rajah out so late through all the storm."

He laid aside the book he had been reading since Grant and Quin had sleepily deserted him with the first lulling of the storm, filled his pipe and, smoking, began to play Canfield. Finding himself building with duplicate colors, he rose irritably and walked to the window, glancing at the broken tree boughs in the street below. Overhead the sky was clearing rapidly. Already a few stars gleamed mistily through the rain-washed darkness of the night.

"Crazy stunt," he grumbled, "to go riding off so early in the rain. Great Guns! What a wind to strip the trees so!"

The telephone feebly clicked and whirred, and

eagerly on the heels of Lloyd's hello, came the Doctor's anxious voice.

"Larry has not come in yet, eh, Lloyd?  
. . . Hum . . . I canna see why the daffy lad should have taken it into his head to trot about in such a fearful storm. I have been pesterin' Central to give me a connection with ye this half hour . . . No, we have all been scallawaggin' about the house since midnight, with Caesar and Luath a-howlin' with fear and Ginger almost kickin' the barn down when the thunder cracked. A wild night, eh, Lloyd?  
. . . Can ye mayhap see the blaze of old Bill Stover's barn over Cleton way? I dinna doubt ye can see it well from your kitchen windows — "

The Doctor's voice trailed off queerly. "Ye will not mind callin' me, Lloyd," it came again strongly, "when Larry comes in? The Leddy Glenmuir is pesterin' fearful about him and I have not been easy myself."

At the click of a latchkey in the outer door as the Doctor rang off, Lloyd hurried to the dining room in quick relief, halting aghast by the table. Larry stood in the hall doorway, his face and hands bleeding from a score of scratches, his clothing drenched and torn. Lloyd's dark, boyish face went suddenly as white as his chief's.

"For God's sake, Larry," he exclaimed in keen alarm, "what is it? Anything wrong? The lightning didn't get you, did it? Here," shakily pouring some brandy from a decanter upon the sideboard, "drink this. It will brace you up a bit."

Mechanically Larry obeyed. As he set his glass down, it clinked against a bowl of water lilies Rose had picked for Grant; for the first time now he was conscious of their perfume. Shuddering he swept the bowl of flowers from the table to the floor.

"Thank you," he said with an effort. "The brandy helped."

And for all Lloyd glanced at the scattered lilies and back again at his chief, he loyally refrained from further question.

From the library came again the click and whir of the telephone and as Lloyd answered it the voice of Gallagher, the liveryman, came excitedly over the wire.

"Gallagher says Rajah has just come in by himself in nasty shape," said Lloyd reappearing. "Says he's sent for a veterinarian. Did he throw you, Larry?"

"No," said Larry, avoiding Lloyd's eyes, "I left him outside just now. He must have galloped off."

Puzzled, Lloyd watched his chief disappear within his bedroom. Then he seized his cap and went hurrying through the quiet streets to the Hame o' Roses.

Now paramount in Lloyd's mind as he swung rapidly along Auburnia Avenue was the relieved assurance that his chief was in bed after the unwonted turbulence of the night; that here at least was something upon which he might put the Doctor's mind at rest. Had he known that Larry too had furtively left the Music Box it would have fired his keen disquietude anew.

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Larry's wish to ride off again into the night after his visit to the Music Box, had been checkmated by Rajah's frightened bolt for the stable. Now he was walking again to the north, certain of nothing save the final goal of his resolve, all the voices of the night calling him to the quiet of Rose's water-garden. At first, eager for the open country and the dark, he had ignored the calling voices, only to halt at last, shaken by the memory of the afternoon, beside the hedge of currants.

High above the water-garden hung a storm-tardy moon, serenely silvering pool and cascade, glinting here and there among the rain-bright

sedge and reeds. Moon-tinsel glimmered fitfully among the drowsy float of water lilies but rush and flag were bent and broken by the storm and the giant willow trailed a wind-wrecked plume of green.

From a rustic bench among the shadows Larry watched the swaying curtains of Rose's room. How wonderfully quiet this dear haunt of Leddy Rose! Only the musical purl of the pool cascades and the plaintive monody of the frogs in the marshland to the north disturbed the peace and hush of the moonlit stillness. How long he sat staring at the phantom mosaic of moon and tree shadow mirrored upon the surface of the pool ahead he did not know, but, rousing, with the thought that he must be up and away before the dawn, he saw that which sent rebellion surging through his veins afresh.

On the farther side of the moon-bright pool, in a gown of white wool girdled loosely with a silken cord, stood Rose herself, her face strained and white in the moonlight, her fair hair hanging in a heavy braid below her waist. Some sweet, white-habited priestess of the summer moon, she seemed, and Larry, caught in the overwhelming consciousness of her nearness, stumbled from the shadows, calling her name.

Startled, the girl drew back.

"Larry," she said, "you — you frightened me! I did not know you were here. . . . Oh, Larry, my poor boy, what is it? There is blood on your face and your clothes are wet and torn."

"It is nothing," said Larry. "I was riding in the storm."

Rose shuddered.

"It has been a terrible night," she said. "It has seemed as if the ghosts of terrible things were abroad in the storm. I could not sleep and the garden looked so peaceful from my window. You have been here long?"

"I do not know," said Larry truthfully and Rose wheeled, white and shaking.

"Oh, Larry," she cried, her eyes dark and tragic in the colorless oval of her face, "why have you come here in the night so white and stern and terrible? I — I can never forget you as you look now. There is something about it all that frightens me. Larry," she went on hurriedly, "I can not bear to think that such terrible suffering has come to you through me. Oh, why was I so blind and selfish?" In a panic of remorse at the memory of the winter, Rose swayed and would have fallen had Larry not leaped to her side. And even with his arm about her shoulders, she fell forward upon her

knees with a sob, crying out her grief for his hurt.

Very gently Larry helped her to her feet. With a cry of horror Rose recoiled. For there upon the grass between them, glinting evilly in the moonlight, lay the object of Larry's return to the Music Box, a telltale thing of steel and glitter tumbled from his pocket by his leap to Rose.

With flaming cheeks the girl bent and seized the weapon from the ground, her darkly-fringed eyes passionate wells of horror and reproach.

"Oh, Larry," she cried pityingly, "surely you are brave enough to live your life as it may come to you!"

"No," said Larry, "I am not."

Rose wheeled upon him in rebuke. If Larry had come to view this girl before him as a calm and gentle saint eternally immune from all the human turbulences of mind and body, now as her impassioned words assailed him, he was to learn the truth. No longer the winsome, gentle, cheery Rose of the winter — no calm and bloodless saint; instead a woman intensely human and alive. Inexorable Leddy Rose's standards of love and duty; tender, sweet and wistful her gentle optimism and lofty ideals, seeming to set her divinely apart from life itself; but under-

lying them after all was the passionate surge of humanness.

Now for all the sting of her censure, there was a great fear in Rose's eyes, and presently she turned with a shudder and fiercely flung the revolver into the pool beside her. A frog leaped from the leaves of the parrot's feather along the edge, green and glistening in the moonlight, and as his frightened dive broke the water-mirror into ever widening circles, the eyes of these two met. Clear and unfaltering the eyes of Rose, but the look that came to Larry's was one of shame.

"After all, Larry," she said bravely, "it — it is not because I do not love you that I must bring to you this pain and sorrow. That knowledge came to me so strongly this afternoon after you had gone —"

But Larry was beside her now in startled comprehension.

"Surely," he said, "you do not — can not mean —"

But Rose's steadfast eyes, scorning to veil the truth, were answer enough and Larry roughly caught her hands. Then, seeing again in her face that quick quiver of hurt and pity for himself he groaned in an agony of foreboding.

"And your love for me makes no difference?"

Rose shook her head.

"Oh, can you not see that it is all very hard for me too?" she demanded passionately. "To-night I lay awake for hours fighting it all out. . . . Larry, you must not feel again as you have felt to-night about life — and — and death. It is a terrible thing to value life's great mysteries so lightly. I must go on living and fighting — and so must you. You will promise?"

And looking up, Larry caught in Rose's eyes the shadow of her sacrifice, and the memory of her eternal cheeriness came over him to shame his hour of madness anew.

"You are right," he said; "I have been a very great coward."

"And you will promise?"

"Yes," said Larry humbly. "I too will live and fight. I will go away," he said at length. "Perhaps in time I may come to see that you are right. I — I can not see that now."

Rose sighed.

"It is very hard to have you go," she said with white lips, "but it is better so."

The shadows of the moon faded mystically into gray; ghost-like through the velvet stillness, rush and flag and sedge bent rustling spires in orison to the morning wind. From the

willow came the first sweet bird call of the day, then faint through the trees came the opaline flush of dawn, a rose-pearl oriflamme of the vanguard of Aurora.

## Chapter 10

*Tells how the Doctor took a hand in his nephew's  
wooing and how he closed the studio  
door behind him*

OH, Peggy," exclaimed the Doctor petulantly, "I just canna see how ye contrive to stumble so frequent. Deil take it, ye would stumble head over kerturby over a shadow if I did not drive around it!" And the Doctor, frowning, threaded his way among the storm litter of the night before, staring glumly about him.

"Didn't I tell ye to shake a leg, Peggy?" he demanded with an irritable tug at the reins. "A verra indifferent sort of person I may be myself, Peggy, but the Leddy Glenmuir's right. There's no doubt at all in my noddle this mornin' that ye're a verra indifferent sort of nag."

Peggy flicked unbelieving ears, but the Doctor's mood was very black and he recanted none of it. Moreover, he morosely urged the aggrieved mare into a grotesque gallop, halting at last at the Westons with a biting comment.

"I have known bullfrogs with a more grace-

ful gallop, Peggy!" he sniffed and swung off moodily up the walk.

Through a window in the east wing, he caught sight of Rose and charging through the open screen door without the formality of a knock, confronted her with flashing eyes and lines of grim reproof about his mouth.

"Oh, Leddy Rose!" he blurted, diving characteristically into the heart of his errand, "what have ye gone and done to my poor lad?"

Rose colored faintly and the Doctor went on in stern rebuke.

"What with him a-scallowaggin' about all night in the storm and homin' again all dazed and queer with his face a-bleedin' and Rajah almost dolt with fear, I just knew well enough the poor lad's sweetheartin' had not gone guid —"

"I did not think you knew —"

"Didn't Lloyd come chasin' to the Hame so white and shaky I had to doctor him before he could tell me of my poor lad smashin' the bowl of lilies ye gave to Grant? . . . Oh, lassie, I just winna have ye cruel to Larry. He's my own lad, with just such a spot in my heart as I would gie my own son."

"I know," nodded Rose. "And he is worth all you give him."

"Then why," demanded the Doctor, "canna ye help me in the givin'? There is no one but yourself can give the poor lad his heart's desire. Oh, Leddy Rose, I am sorely displeased with ye. Ye will not find such another lad anywhere in God's world. He is so kindly-humored and so loyal with all his wild Highland blood, and Cupid himself could not find ye such a braw, faithful, earnest lover. Canna ye have a bit pity upon the lad's lonely heart?"

White and tired Rose turned away to the window.

"Dinna ye care a boddle for the poor lad?" asked the Doctor bitterly.

Rose bit her lips courageously and stared through the window at the Doctor's mare drowsing in the morning sunlight, knee-deep in broken boughs, but the tranquil picture grew blurred and indistinct, and turning she wiped away her tears, owning her love for Larry with a swift flash of candor, with eyes from whose wistful velvet the Doctor turned away.

"Oh, *why* did you not warn him?" she cried passionately. "Surely you knew better than anyone else. Could you not have told him that marriage is not for such as I?"

"And why, I would have ye tell me, is not marriage for the likes of you, Leddy Rose?"

flamed the Doctor, artfully misunderstanding. "What with the gentle mother-heart of ye and the wonderful, caressin' patience of all ye do, 'tis such a bit of bright, warmin' sunlight as a tired and lonely man needs in his home. There is no lady in the land so fit." The Doctor's eyes grew moist. "Ye were a sweet, flower-faced bairn, Leddy Rose, and a winsome lass, and I have never met in all my life such a loyal, tireless, sunny-hearted daughter, but now I would see ye as a woman with the destiny of a woman, as a wife for my poor Larry and in God's guid time such a mother as does not come to bairns once in a century. If I was told to pick a wife for the angel Gabriel, I would pick yourself.

*"It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth  
That coft contentment, peace and pleasure:  
The bands and bliss o' mutual love  
O! that's the chiefest world's treasure!"*

"I have set my heart upon it," finished the Doctor fretfully, "and I winna rest content until Larry calls ye wife."

"It is not that I do not see that marriage is the natural way of living," countered Rose, "and surely if love can make a wife and mother,

I could do that too. It—it is my duty to others.”

Now this was the very admission for which the Doctor had waited, and with it the storm broke in earnest. However indifferently Rose had viewed her life of sacrifice, she learned its import now. Bitingly the Doctor flayed King Rodney. Swept into imprudence by anger and disappointment and his keen regard for Larry, he bared the ugly pivot upon which the abnormality of her family life had hung. Rose listened with burning face, but she said nothing. For after all, the vagaries of the Doctor's tongue were already woefully familiar and her warm affection for the offender condoned much. Unsteadily she slipped into a chair by the window, the Doctor towering wrathfully above her.

“Duty to others!” he stormed. “Your conception of duty narrows down to panderin’ to that thingumaderry of a man who calls himself an artist. There are some, Leddy Rose,” went on the Doctor fiercely, mixing metaphors in his excitement, “who would not recognize the feel of duty if ye dropped ’em full into a pond of it, and there are others who go a-trollin’ for a pebble of duty with a snowshovel, fearful of missin’ it. Your father is the one and yourself the other. Dinna talk to me of duty, Rose, lass,

or I winna keep my temper and my tongue in tow."

Quite unconscious of the humor of this final statement, the Doctor halted. Somehow he had fancied he could shake her resolution by baring ugly truths, but now as he looked down at her his self-assurance weakened. Stung by the memory of the firelit hours in the music room, he fell desperately to pleading Larry's suit, his quaint diction, broadly Scotch now, colored with an irresistible eloquence and warmth. All the magnetic force of his personality was playing powerfully upon his victim, but though Rose listened, thrilled indescribably by his loyalty to Larry, her eyes at the end were firm and sorrowful, wherefore the Doctor's self-control deserted him entirely.

"Ye will wed the poor lad, then, Leddy Rose?" he thundered.

"I can not!" said Rose and the Doctor's eyes shot fire. Unnerved by the powerful conflict of will, the girl shrank back and buried her face in her hands with a sob. Instantly the Doctor was beside her, the current of his mood changing with characteristic swiftness.

"Oh, my poor Leddy Rose!" he said remorsefully, a wealth of compassionate tenderness in his voice. "I would not hurt ye so for all

Christendom. What with my lashin' about so fearful with my clackin' tongue, I have just fair forgotten myself. Dinna mind me, lassie. I am such a meddlesome old sawbones as ye winna meet again in a century, but dinna forget, child, that I have the welfare of both yourself and Larry verra close to my heart, and I must tell ye now while I'm about it that I could not say which of ye I care for most. Come, come, Leddy Rose, I winna have ye cry so hard. Every sob is cuttin' me sorely with reproach. Ye canna help seein' your duty so queerly, I take it, and I canna help meddlin'. 'Tis the way of the two of us, but I will not pester ye any more, lass. God knows I have meddled too much already. Leddy Rose, I would have ye accept the remorseful apologies of a verra wicked-tempered man who canna control his tongue or his temper or his meddlesome, matchmakin' ways!"

And with a terrible rasp of his throat he was gone, marching with set lips through the rambling file of rooms to the studio, where he entered and closed the door behind him.

Now what occurred behind the closed door of Rodney's studio was not known for many and many a day thereafter, but very shortly the Doctor emerged and drove away, and from the

invaded sanctum came a hysterical summons for nerve medicine.

"There's no doubt in my sinful mind, Peggy," muttered the Doctor fiercely as he drove away, "that Rodney's subconscious mind will trick him into paintin' with blacks and purples this day, and maybe 'tonal bisters'!"

And a little later in melancholy review:

"Oh, Peggy, lass, I canna help thinkin' of my poor Leddy Rose with her lovely face so white and her eyes so mortal tragic. Deil take it, I am sorely displeased with myself. I fancied I would drive away from my bickerin' all set up with a delightful sense of my own importance as a diplomat, and I have conducted myself with characteristic flightiness and sinful presumption. Here I have been flamin' about an old friend's house — I'm meanin' Letty, ye mind, Peggy! — like a demented skyrocket, seekin' with my sparks and my spouts of flame and all the other whirligigums to dazzle the dear Leddy Rose into surrender; and with all my fearful fireworks I have only gone and hurt the poor lass without helpin' Larry. Now that my rocketin' is over and the sticks are fallin' down and the smoke of 'em has besmirched my self-respect with shame, I dinna feel so proud and sinful about my hand in Larry's wooin'."

And all this he repeated later to Mrs. Glenmuir.

“Oh, Agnes, lass,” he blurted out in bitter remorse at the end, “I canna say I have been so verra successful with my artful Cupidin’. Would that my peck o’ maut had spilled itself before ever it foamed up so high and drowned the happiness of my poor lad!”

## Chapter 11

### *Tells of a sunrise gallop along the River Road*

**T**HROUGH the gray quiet of the dawn loomed the Doctor's elms, locking dew-hung branches in the morning wind. From the driveway, like an elfin flute came the first faint music of the bird-chimes and with it came Jean, trimly habited in blue, riding Ginger noiselessly over the grass along the driveway to the street.

A horseman turning into Auburnia Avenue at the block below, waved his riding crop to the girl, and with a wave of her hand Jean galloped to meet him.

"Larry," she exclaimed, "I *am* late. Did you wait very long at the bridge for me?"

"No," said Larry. "I was a bit restless and rode straight up to meet you."

Jean glanced furtively at her cousin's face as they galloped through the silent city to the River Road. It was the first of their dawn-rides since the storm but, finely considerate, Jean permitted herself no reference to the turbulence of Larry's week.

"How wonderfully fresh and cool it is this morning, Larry! And how gray and tranquil the sky and river! What prodigality it is to forego a sunrise!"

Larry nodded.

"It's a bit of a farewell gallop, too, this time," he said, looking away at the mist-crowned hills. "I fear it's the last of our 'gray rides' for some time, Cousin Jean. I'm sailing for Egypt in the morning."

"Sailing — in the *morning*? Larry!"

"En route to Syria. Bob found a canceled passage for me yesterday. It *is* a bit abrupt but —" he reddened.

"But — but why Syria?" stammered Jean. "It's so very warm for an Oriental trip."

"I'm easily acclimated. Besides, the whim is strong. There's a lonely desert monastery over there in which Grant and Quin and I spent a night when we were nomading about and I've a mind to visit it again. I can't pretend to describe the wonderful peace and quiet of it. They impressed me then and they're luring now. I shall never forget the solemn midnight bell that called the monks to prayer. Then I may take a caravan trip through Palestine into Arabia and the desert, and, a little later, into India and Thibet."

"But, Larry," faltered Jean, "it will be months and months —"

"Yes," nodded Larry, "it will, of course." And struck by the note of quick decision in his voice, Jean fell to deploring afresh the outcome of her cousin's wooing.

"Lloyd can manage well enough without me," Larry was saying. "Besides, Ralph Taylor's coming in with us for a start. He's studied in the Beaux Arts himself and does corking work."

"And dad knows you're going?"

"No, he doesn't! I've been thinking perhaps you'll tell him for me."

"It will not be easy," said Jean.

Larry glanced thoughtfully at his cousin's profile.

"Bob had a great notion he'd like to come along with me if it were possible. He seems a bit out of sorts."

"Isn't his philosophy working?"

Larry frowned.

"Bob has a very fine sort of philosophy," he urged, "but it isn't arrow-proof. Did you ever stop to think, Jean, that there are two brands of philosophy? One is a superficial sort which, in the truest sense, isn't philosophy at all. It springs from temperament entirely and, I fancy, is merely the ingrained stolidity of the emotional

laggard. The other, Bob's kind, is a bigger kind. It spells the finest sort of will power and intellectual self-control. Bob has a powerful will and he's disciplined himself so thoroughly that he's lost sight of his own depths. There are nevertheless tremendous forces hidden away beneath his laziness and good humor."

Jean stared straight ahead.

"It is a new viewpoint," she admitted.

"There have been times," said Larry, "when I would have given much for Bob's large and wholesome philosophy of existence."

Flame-bright through the trees glinted the gold of the sunrise, and with one accord the two wheeled their horses to the east, watching the play of light upon the water. And Larry, noting the clear red in Jean's cheeks, attributed it to the talk of Bob and felt a secret sense of satisfaction. He was presently disillusioned.

Jean suddenly wheeled her horse and her darkly golden eyes were very tearful.

"Whenever I face the east again at sunrise," she said, her voice breaking, "I — I shall think of you away off there alone, fighting." She laid an impulsive hand upon his arm. "Oh, Larry, I *am* so sorry!"

"Well, yes," said Larry whimsically; "I am myself."

## Chapter 12

*In which the doctor decides to keep on brewing*

THERE was a general feeling in the Music Box that Larry would like best to go quietly off in the morning with Bob, without the usual fanfare of adieus upon the pier. To this end therefore word was passed along to Bob, and to his intense relief Larry found his going made easier by the thoughtfulness of his friends. To be sure, the Doctor, fretful and melancholy after a desperate midnight attempt to bully Larry into altering his plans, bade fair to be intractable at the end, evincing telephonic symptoms of a desire to quarrel with Bob about his solitary privilege of seeing Larry off, but in the end it was Bob alone who watched the steamer sail, waving to the last a cheerful arm which bravely belied his mood. And later, returning on the noonday train, he stopped in at the Hame o' Roses on his way to lunch.

"Why, hang it all, Jean," he finished, "when Larry waved his arm to me from the deck with the same old smile around his mouth, I'd half a notion to swim out after him! It's a con-

founded shame — that's what it is — and I'm going to tell Rose so myself." He swung on down the veranda steps and turned. "And he's suffering all the more of course because he isn't a — *philosopher!*"

Now it was that the Doctor took an intense dislike to his midnight hour in the office. The flavor of his coffee was nothing like so "guid" he fretted; doubtless the thievin' man who sold it had just learned the wicked trick of adulteratin'. Even his atrocious cigars grew somehow worse than usual. Moreover, he took to bullying and reviling his patients for trivial misdemeanors, and bickered crossly with his cribbage cronies. Mrs. Glenmuir felt called upon to protest.

"I just canna help it, Agnes," snapped the Doctor, "and I winna try! I miss the lad so much that I canna help feelin' fair sick all over about it. What with that and thoughts of my peck o' maut, and Bennie raggin' me so persistent about my troosers, I could almost do murder; and if I started once," he nodded darkly, "I know well enough whom I would murder first.

*"O, how can I be blythe and glad,  
Or how can I gang brisk and braw,  
When the bonny lad that I lo'e best  
Is o'er the hills and far awa!"*

“Agnes, ’tis a matter of verra great regret with me, but I feel it comin’ over me again most uncommon strong that I must meddle a bit and undo some of my own tanglin’. A peck o’ maut after all is a verra queer thing. If ye once begin brewin’ ye must keep on or ye will have no peace of mind.”

“Oh, Roderick,” begged Mrs. Glenmuir fearfully, “don’t. You are so indiscreet — ”

“Indiscreet!” exclaimed the Doctor indignantly. “Guid faith, Agnes, ’tis a word I would not have thought of applyin’ to myself. Just how would ye make such a strong case out against me?”

“Well, you’ve said at times yourself that your tongue is a trifle — intractable. For instance, I fancied it was a bit indiscreet to tell Norman and Grant and Bob all about Lloyd’s visit here the night of the storm and the reason for it. You remember Bob’s indignant call upon Rose was one result of your — talking.”

“Aweel, Agnes,” evaded the Doctor, “I would not just criticize Bobbie for that. I have heard tell of such performances before. Anyway, lass, what with all the lads knowin’ so much about Larry’s year of silence and his courtin’ the dear lass so artistically with firelight and music, and all of ’em so mortal interested, I just had

to notify 'em when the poor lad's soap-bubble of romance burst so verra unexpected. Surely even yourself canna help seein' the fairness of that."

"Who, I wonder, revealed all the picturesque details which so enlivened their interest?"

"Aweel, Agnes, lass," parried the Doctor skillfully, "I would not care to cast suspicion upon anyone, but there's no doubt that whoever 'twas that did the gabbin', 'twas a verra imprudent proceedin'."

But he discreetly dropped the subject of further brewing, sensing opposition.

"Roderick Glenmuir," he reminded himself later over his coffee, "ye canna seem to mind your own business, can ye? I have scant respect for your meddlesome tricks. Away with your schemin', sir! 'Tis verra unbecomin' to a sawbones."

But the temptation returned tenfold, and the Doctor presently jotted down some notes and studied them with interest.

"I canna help myself," he decided. "'Tis such a guid schemie I canna let it pass without a try."

And long after he was in bed, wide-awake and unusually restless, a chuckle or two of satisfaction eluded control.

“Agnes,” he apologized, “dinna ye bother your pretty head aboot me, lass. I winna giggle again. ’Tis but a schemie.”

And Mrs. Glenmuir dozed again, mercifully unaware of the definite trend of the schemie.

## Chapter 13

*In which the doctor secretly plays the role of a dangerous character and enlists the aid of a henchman*

NO doubt about it, Peggy, 'tis a verra war-r-m day," conceded the Doctor one sunset as the mare halted drowsily in a shady street. "But to-day I would consider it a verra great favor indeed if ye would just skip your wee nappie now and take it later at hame. There are matters of great importance afoot." The Doctor sniffed importantly. "Matters of great importance, and so verra private to boot that if Jeannie and the Leddy Glenmuir suspected, I would doubtless be hanged at sunset among my own roses as a most fearful example to all other meddlers. Tactful we must be, Peggy, verra tactful, just layin' the threads of the big schemie to-day with a word here and another word there."

He shook the reins, and Peggy moved on sleepily up the street. Peggy's locomotion was such that it never interfered with ambidextrous activity. Now the Doctor wrapped the reins

around the back of the buggy seat and fell to studying a certain "paper of maneuvers."

"Guid faith!" he chuckled, "I am experiencin' all the delightful thrills of a man who's carryin' incriminatin' papers! Shake a leg there, Peggy, lass, shake a leg! I have now become a most dangerous character and I canna have my steed so calm and drowsy."

Turning into the busier thoroughfares of the city Doctor Roderick presently drew rein before an apartment house and proceeded by elevator to the topmost floor.

Somewhere in the Cave, Jerry's oboe was wailing dismally as the Doctor made his way to the room where Norman pursued his calling as a dentist.

"Now," thought he, "now for enlistin' my henchman in the schemie!"

"Norman," accused his visitor as the young dentist emerged from an easy chair with a hearty greeting, "ye're a nice lad, but ye're entirely too lazy and luxurious and fat. Ye dinna have to work and ye dinna do it—to any harmful extent."

"Great Guns!" exclaimed Norman, aggrieved. "I—work like a squirrel."

"Like a squirrel—in winter," nodded the Doctor, "and a snowplow in summer!"

With a twinkle he appraised Norman's clean-shaven face, clear-red of cheek and round of contour like his eyes.

"Norman, lad, in picturin' ye I would sketch ye all in circles, with a guid handful of dimples to sprinkle about, and I would by no chance omit to have the socks and tie of the same shade of silk. Now, if ye dinna mind my askin', lad-die, what would ye be doin' over there?"

Norman confessed that he was making collar buttons out of dental gold.

"God bless my soul!" The doctor stared. "Would ye just listen to the daffy lad! Makin' collar buttons out of embryo teeth! Can ye beat such a niffy-naffy dentist as that! What with his collar-buttonin' fancywork, I dinna wonder the lad's so busy he just canna work. Whist, Norm, are ye still so mortal keen on readin' old time romances?"

For answer Norman produced from an ingenious drawer with an impressive but mendacious label, a book bearing the title, "Dolores, Daughter of Olden Spain."

"A peach!" he recommended.

"Bless your romance-lovin' heart!" beamed the Doctor. "I just knew ye would not disappoint me, and me with such a great schemie, such a great and fascinatin' schemie, sir, as ye

winna find in any book. But mind ye, laddie, dinna ye ever give me away. I would be in a pickle! 'There's many and many a one in Auburnia, I'm thinkin', would consign me to the Brimstone Hornie himself if ye did!"

And nodding darkly, the "dangerous character" produced an incriminating paper of notes and beckoned Norman to his side. Followed an impressive exposition of the schemie, to which Norman listened with twinkling eyes. Mightily pleased at his henchman's enthusiasm, the Doctor let his tongue wag on, resourceful and convincing, and eventually he stayed to dinner that the pair might start the ball a-rolling.

It was a picturesque place — the Cave — decided the Doctor at dinner, staring in keen amusement at the tinted walls frescoed by the brush of Jerry. Here one might see caricatures of Lloyd and Larry laboriously making blueprints at the office; of Quin Courtney writing the enthusiastic letter that had brought his three favorite classmates to Auburnia, the letter setting fire to the postman's coat-tails; of Grant Dallinger ("Real Estate and Insurance" flamingly lettered on his hat) exchanging a city lot for an automobile, as he had, and Grant exchanging a city lot for a pair of shoes, as he had not — and near him a map of Auburnia which fully

accounted for all the rest of his apparel.

There was Bob writing a Gunnigan editorial with a stick of brimstone; Norman absorbed in romance-reading, absently boring away a large portion of his patient's jaw; and Roger, fat, dark and dirty, clarinetting in a "mud-gutter" band with his pockets full of black cigars. And in the most unexpected places appeared Jerry himself in the various stages of gloom to which he was addicted, all his lines running characteristically to the vertical.

Nor had the domestic force escaped. There were charcoal sketches of Uncle Shad and P. D. Q., the partnership cat, and sketches of O'Hagan tightly wedged in an ancient Prince Albert and a battered silk hat; and, grand masterpiece of all, the janitor! For, jauntily parading about the four walls in grotesque procession appeared what Jerry had aptly termed a janitorial frieze depicting the many phases of the janitor's activity. It was peculiarly significant that every fourth figure or so appeared to be hammering madly at a door whose cracks gave egress to whole flocks of winged notes, and that in the end, shorn of conventional attire, the janitor proved to be Mephistopheles in disguise deputized from the Inferno to smother budding genius.

It was a wonderful evening — an evening in which Jerry at the Doctor's request sketched Norman on the wall, in circles and dimples, filling with a gold collar button an enormous cavity in the jaw of a prize-fighter. And in a final burst of inspiration the artist added a travesty of the Doctor himself clad in the robes of a Roman charioteer madly urging the tranquil Peggy to shake a much-needed leg. And through it all the Doctor and his henchman slyly fertilized the ground for the Doctor's scheme!

## Chapter 14

*In which Mrs. Glenmuir interviews the dangerous character and learns something about the schemes of mice and men*

WHATEVER the progress of the scheme in the days that followed, days of suspicious intimacy and midnight chats with Norman, certainly both the Doctor and his henchman seemed beset with pernicious activity, roving about upon obscure errands, greeting each other with mysterious chuckles and wearing such a challenging air of inscrutability that Mrs. Glenmuir grew suspicious.

"Roderick," she began one night, seating herself beside the Doctor's desk, "just what sort of mischief are you and Norman planning anyway?"

"Mischief, Agnes!" The Doctor raised aggrieved eyes from his *Medical Journal*. "Guid faith, lass, ye're so verra unexpected at times ye just fair startle a body."

"Then I found this in the wastebasket —"

The Doctor inspected it with a paralyzing

sense of guilt. It was a straggling copy of the paper of maneuvers. His surrender was unexpected.

"Whist, Agnes, I dinna wish to be so pestered about my daffy matchmakin'. Ye just canna conceive, dear lass, what a rare peck of trouble I've been gettin' myself into."

Mrs. Glenmuir met this frank bid for sympathy with a non-committal "Hum."

"More things could not have gone wrong, Agnes, if I had sat myself down sudden in a hive of bees."

"The customary fate," said Mrs. Glenmuir, "of the meddler."

"Dinna I know well enough that I'm meddling?" demanded the Doctor. "I canna help it. Now that ye have run me down so artful, Agnes, would ye be so guid as to give your ear to my troubles?"

Mrs. Glenmuir laughed and the Doctor, relieved, drew the paper of maneuvers toward him with a frown.

"Ye mind, Agnes, how Kipling's fine old lama says to Kim, 'Thou hast loosed an act upon the world and as a stone thrown into a pool, so spread the consequences thou canst not tell how far.' 'Tis just so with me now! I'm in a most fearful mess. Draw your chair closer,

lass. I would have ye go over this troublesome document with me and give me a bit of guid advice."

Mrs. Glenmuir obeyed with foreboding.

"Ye see," confided the schemer, "'tis just so," indicating a list of names. "Just so I planned with Norman's aid to pair off the lads of the Music Box and the Cave and the Weston lasses but, Oh, Agnes, ye canna conceive how niffy-naffy all of them have taken to actin', down to Norman himself!"

"But, Roderick," protested Mrs. Glenmuir, "*why* pair them off at all?"

"'Twas such a guid schemie, such a verra guid schemie, I just could not resist. Besides, Agnes, it came to me that the way to simplify poor Larry's problem was by the process of elimination. . . . Canna ye see through my schemie yet?"

"You have developed surprising subtleties!"

"Hum. Aweel, 'tis this way, Agnes. Thinks I to myself: 'If all the lasses are married, we have a much less complicated situation to pester us. Therefore I would have 'em married off immediate!' Dinna stare so, Agnes; there are ways and ways! Then if I canna do anything else to free poor Leddy Rose, I myself will get that gowk of a Rodney a job if 'tis nothing

more than paintin' houses about town. 'Though to be sure," he added with a sniff, " that would be a dangerous experiment! Why, Agnes, if a body ordered a white house and Rodney's subconscious mind got to workin' overnight account of old Mollie kickin' the barn down or some such disturbin' rumpus, the poor householder would like as not find himself saddled with a red and purple house instead. Still, 'tis an excellent business for breakin' a man's neck and that is not to be sneezed at! With all the lasses married, therefore, and maybe helpin' their parents along a bit, and King Rodney workin' at last like a God-fearin' man, couldn't Letty keep house herself and give up brokerin'?"

"Perhaps. But, Oh, Roderick —"

"Dinna mind me, Agnes. I'm a meddlesome old matchmaker in my heart but I dinna doubt it's because I married so verra well myself." And fearing to spoil this bit of diplomacy, the Doctor wisely passed on to the paper of maneuvers.

"Norman and I have done an astonishin' amount of work to bring the lads and lasses together just as I have it all written there — Norm said 'twould be mortal easy with the proper direction, the lads and lasses already bein' friends — but ye canna conceive how verra dif-

ferent it has all come about." The Doctor scanned his list with a groan of despair. "Why, Agnes, would ye believe it, it has just kept me awake of nights plannin' how to keep all those daffy lads from fallin' head over kerturby in love with June Weston because she looked the most like Leddy Rose! . . . 'Tis not funny, Agnes," reproached the Doctor, "with poor gloomy Jerry a-cherishin' a secret passion for the pretty lass ever since he was there so much paintin' Rose's picture."

"How did you manage?" asked Mrs. Glenmuir, avoiding the Doctor's glint of suspicion.

"Summoned the lot of them to the office one night and told 'em flat about Jerry and how the poor lad had up and confided to me that he lacked the courage to press his suit. They're as loyal as my own Highlanders and their fancy was not so verra serious. They spoke some of thrashin' poor Jerry for keepin' his fancy a secret!"

"Roger and Marcia!" read Mrs. Glenmuir. "You managed that?"

"Oh, my, my, no, Agnes!" sniffed the Doctor. "After Norm and myself near ran Roger's fat legs off with errands to Marcia's office, too! The pair are excellent friends and nothin' more." And the Doctor spoke bitterly of many and

many another romantic inspiration that had borne platonic fruit. Mrs. Glenmuir's control fled at last in a wave of laughter.

"'Tis vastly humorous, no doubt," agreed the Doctor dryly. "I would have ye wait, however, until ye have heard all of my troubles. Midway then of this fearful jumble it develops that Lloyd Ridgely is a bit of a woman-hater though not to any alarmin' extent. Anyway he up and confides to Norman that he for one has never seen the lass that could muddle *his* head. And, Agnes, would ye believe it, he's become most as cagy as a trout."

The Doctor sighed.

"But of all of them, my own assistant, Norman, has pestered me most. The lad's conduct has just been scandalous — fair scandalous! Doubtless, Agnes, ye guessed that I enlisted his aid because he was such a wonderful lover of romance. Hum! I did not suspect that that verra quality of his would become a perfect curse. Why, Agnes, he was all for arrangin' hairbreadth rescues and kidnappin's and hirin' robbers to waylay the lasses just when the lads were by to chase them off and all such daffy contrivances. I just could not leave him out of my sight. If he disappeared of a sudden, I would have to go scallawaggin' about town

straightway after him, fearin' he would set fire to the Weston home so the lads could put it out — or something worse. Any commotion in the street that drew a crowd fussed me right away for I could not help thinkin' that Norman was doubtless mixed up in it in the further pursuit of the schemie. Bless ye, he has been a verra tough nerve strain! And just a while back to-night," the Doctor's groan was pregnant with disaster, "while I was sittin' here verra calm and peaceful, in comes Norm, moonin' about with a strange, guilty look in his eyes, and tells me he's in love!"

"With?"

"Oh, my, my, my, Agnes!" exploded the harassed matchmaker, "with June, of course! Can ye beat it? Straightway I up and remind Norm once more of Jerry's fancy for her and then after all our hobnobbin' and schemin' and scallawaggin' about together, if the two of us didn't fall to bickerin' and quarrelin' like two fretsome magpies. Norm he just wouldn't listen to reason about Jerry and June and spoke some of fightin' a duel first with Jerry and then with me." The Doctor mopped his forehead. "The lad rambled on like a lunatic, talkin' large of buyin' an aeroplane and kidnappin' June without her consent and all such big talk as that.

‘Norm,’ I pointed out desperately, ‘I just will not have ye fallin’ in love with a Weston. There’s no eligible Weston left in the schemie but t’other twin Lucia whom I had intended for Lloyd, and such a strenuous, athletic lass as she is, who thinks nothin’ at all of walkin’ ten or fifteen miles at a stretch and exercisin’ with a punchin’ bag as big as herself, would not look at so lazy and luxurious a lad as yourself.’

“And with that, Agnes,” went on the scandalized Doctor, “Norm bolts wildly out of his chair, claps his hat upon his head like a madman and gallops out of the house, scoldin’ away that just to spite me he will make Lucia Weston fall in love with him whether or no he is so fat.”

The Doctor shook his head in melancholy reflection.

“Aweel,” he added, “‘the best laid schemes o’ mice and men gang aft agley!’ What would be your excellent advice, Agnes, lass, to a man who has got himself all mixed up in such a fearful predicament?”

Mrs. Glenmuir counseled an unconditional abandonment of the schemie to the hand of Fate. This the Doctor frowningly considered with at last a more or less reluctant acquiescence, con-

tenting himself with a mournful quotation from his favorite Burns:

*“ But och, I backward cast my e’e  
On prospects drear!  
An’ forward, tho’ I canna see,  
I guess and fear! ”*

## Chapter 15

### *Chiefly equine*

THE drowsy gold of a late August afternoon may have its spots of turbulence like anything else and one of these, Bob Huntley decided as he turned up the Glenmuir driveway swinging his tennis racquet, was undoubtedly the old Glenmuir barn.

From its vine-showered doorway floated the sound of voices and an alarmed whinny and through it came Doctor Roderick himself muttering something about a blunderbuss. He waved a casual arm to Bob, hurried across the lawn and disappeared within the house with a bang of the kitchen door.

"Nothing serious, Bob," called Jean from the barn doorway. "He's merely going to shoot Ginger again with that blunderbuss cripple of ours in the attic. It's an heirloom."

"And what," asked Bob, smiling, "is Ginger's offense this time?"

Jean wrinkled her nose in a boyish grin.

"Well," she acknowledged fairly, "Ginger is

somewhat temperamental and I'm afraid Peggy's tranquility gets on his nerves. He has a bad habit of biting her unexpectedly in the middle of a nap and to-day it startled her so she lost her balance and tumbled over. Unfortunately the Medical Parent was present—he usually is—and Ginger immediately learned his pedigree and his intimate relation to the Glenmuir blunderbuss in involved Scotch for the third time this week."

She led the way back into the barn where the aggrieved Peggy was munching hay, and Ginger, black and fretful, looked on, occasionally showing the whites of a pair of wicked eyes.

"He's a devil, Jean!" said Bob as the girl fearlessly entered the stall and began to saddle him. "Going out?"

"No." Jean wheeled the prancing animal about and shrugged at his antics. "I'm lending him to Carol Weston. No, don't come into the stall, Bob, please! I can manage him so much better alone."

Under the guidance of Jean's strong, white hands, Ginger quieted into the outward semblance of a lamb. The rambling, hay-sweet barn, the girl's white gown and the black of Ginger's flank, made a charming picture, its high lights the flecked gold of the August sun-

light showering through the door, and the girl's bright hair. The weatherbeaten gray of the barn was a twilight note of contrast.

There was something in Jean's independence, however, something in the splendid poise of her mind and body, that always made Bob feel very humble and unimportant and not at all a necessary factor in her future. So to-day he watched the girl's mastery of her horse with a shadow in his eyes.

"Jeannie —" he began.

"*Bob!*" squealed the girl, and the warning was fraught with reminiscence.

"Come play tennis with me," he invited rather guiltily. "I'm to meet Quin at the tennis club."

"Sorry, Bob, but I must wait for Carol."

"Jeannie," came the Doctor's voice from a near-by window as the pair appeared in the barn doorway, "your mother has hidden my blunderbuss. I winna be out to shoot that gowk of a Ginger until I have found it."

Bob trudged on down the driveway, smiling. At the street he turned and waved and Jean turned back to Ginger's stall, vaguely annoyed with herself and her theories and wondering why. Long before she had solved the enigma, Carol Weston had arrived to try her skill in managing Ginger.

"You're sure you don't mind lending him, Jean?" asked Carol.

"Of course not, you silly youngster!" laughed generous Jean, but Ginger fell to capering as she led him out and a little anxiously she added: "Quite sure you can manage him, Carol?"

"Of course! Why, I've been using a horse at the Riding Academy all winter that the other girls were afraid of." Vaulting lightly into the saddle Carol was off, as rare a foil for Ginger's black grace with her dark, vivid coloring as an artist might find.

Northward they flew beyond the city under an archway of trees with the silver glimmer of the river to the right, on and on with rolling meadows in a blaze of sunlight to the left and the checkered shadows of the road ahead. Carol tugged at the rein. Ginger's sole response was a quiver of nerve and sinew and a haughty toss of his handsome head. Startled, Carol sought violently to jerk him to a standstill but Ginger, still fretful from his altercation with Peggy and insolently conscious of an unfamiliar hand upon his bridle, flung back his head resentfully and went flying on, venting his ill-temper upon a strange and reckless rider by running away!

Almost in the first minute of her fright, Carol heard the thud of other hoofs behind her, and the voice of another horseman rang with authority through the din.

"Sit tight!" it warned and panting the girl obeyed, flinging her arms in a panic about the horse's neck. A black shadow swept in a blur beside her, a masculine hand grasped Ginger's bridle and jerked him violently to a standstill and, white and trembling, Carol faced her deliverer.

"Mr. Ridgely!" she said weakly.

"I beg your pardon," he began, "but you're a mighty reckless rider. I've been watching you since you crossed the bridge."

It was a bad beginning. Carol's color came flooding back in a wave of resentment.

"Besides," continued the young horseman, "this is not the sort of mount for such a young and inexperienced girl."

Carol's black eyes blazed indignantly. With high school days a good month back, it was too much. Moreover, Larry's young assistant was no patriarch himself.

"Your own acquaintance with the ballot and the shaving cup," she flashed insolently, "is, I imagine, still in its infancy."

Angry astonishment flamed up in Lloyd's

eyes. Twenty-two is of course none too partial to careless mention of the ballot and the shaving cup. . . . And this from Rose's little sister!

"Besides, the horse happens to belong to a girl!"

"I am well aware of that," said Lloyd with dignity. "He is Jean Glenmuir's magnificent Ginger, but Miss Glenmuir is a superb and thorough horsewoman and not a little girl. Borrowed mounts are mighty dangerous experiments."

Carol glanced at his own black mount and scored with a flash of her beautiful, taunting eyes.

"Mr. Glenmuir's magnificent Rajah, isn't it?" she murmured.

Lloyd colored at the apt retort and bit his lip but for answer he merely wheeled about and rode beside her, one hand upon the runaway's bridle.

"What, may I ask, are you going to do?" demanded the girl on Ginger's back.

"I am going to lead you back home in safety," explained Mr. Ridgely stiffly.

Carol's temper, at no time an insignificant item in her high-strung nature, slipped its moorings. Trembling with anger she grandly commanded

him to drop Ginger's bridle and let her pass! This the determined young man obstinately declined to do.

Carol scoffed and stormed and even pleaded, stung into desperation by the prospect of a humiliating return to the Hame o' Roses led by this high and mighty young man with the angry eyes, but his hand remained upon the bridle, and though he said nothing and stared straight ahead as they rode, Carol saw from the corner of her eye that his mouth was grim and the smooth tan of his skin somewhat flushed. Moreover, the hand upon the bridle was brown and strong and well-formed.

Thus they rode along, angrily appraising each other's youth and borrowed steeds, and thus at last like a beautiful captive of war, Carol rode up the driveway of the Hame o' Roses. To Jean, who greeted the pair with mystified eyes, Lloyd gravely consigned his charge and rode away, touching his riding crop to his forehead in salute as he went. And on the veranda Doctor Roderick raised quizzical eyes from his evening paper and looking first at the angry scarlet in Carol's cheeks and then at the dignified back of the retreating horseman, took refuge as usual in cryptic quotation:

"Hum!" he murmured.

*“ The black-headed eagle  
As keen as a beagle  
He hunted o’er height and o’er howe;  
But fell in a trap  
On the braes o’ Gemappe;  
E’en let him come out as he dowe.”*

## Chapter 16

### *The evolution of the schemie*

NORMAN, the Doctor suspected, still continued his romantic activity. In this he was right.

There came a night when, whistling a little self-consciously, Norman arrived at the Hame o' Roses. In the Doctor's office he held out his hand and apologized manfully for falling in love with Jerry's lass, for talking so much of a duel and an aeroplane and for any other irrationalities the schemie had developed.

"Made a regular ass of myself, you know!" he regretted, coloring, but the Doctor only beamed with pleasure and patting his repentant henchman upon the back, ordered a pot of Flora's coffee to celebrate the occasion.

Over this peace-pot of coffee it developed that Norman hoped the Doctor wouldn't think he had really gone and fallen in love with Lucia Weston for spite, as he had threatened that ridiculous night, but, well, frankly — this with flaring color and boyish apology in his round blue eyes — the mischief was done. Lucia was

such a splendid good fellow! And Roger, fat as he was, had taken a great fancy to the other twin, Eileen, and then by ways many and devious Norman had contrived to get Quin interested in Sonia, and Grant in Marcia —

But here the Doctor and Norman shook hands again over the coffee pot and beamed at each other, from which it may be gathered that a coffee pot of peace is no whit inferior to the fabled pipe of peace of which we read.

“ ’Tis a matter of verra great regret with me,” exclaimed the Doctor, “ but, Norm, I feel it comin’ over me again most uncommon strong that I must meddle again myself with the schemie and help undo a bit of my own tanglin’. I canna have you burdened with all the task.”

But Norm counseled patience. Dame Fate, he suggested, might have but little need of further assistance. Already she was probably gathering in the flying threads of romance her henchmen had loosened for a busy bit of weaving through the winter.

Later, when Norman had departed, the Doctor drew forward his paper of maneuvers by way of a brief post-mortem and made a wry face. Of all the miscarriages of plan which that document suggested, he told himself, certainly the unexpected devotion of the lazy fat

lads for the Weston twins was by far the most astonishing!

Now presently, to the Doctor's consternation, the infectious energy of the twins crept into Norm and Roger, and nights in the cellar gymnasium built by the twins themselves the four pounded madly away at punching bags or fenced to the clash of buttoned foils.

One of these exhibitions the Doctor himself attended, staring so hard all the while that his eyes seemed ever ready to pop from his head in amazement.

"Jerry!" he whispered. "Dinna tell me that's Norm scallawaggin' about that bag of wind like a Gatling gun! I just winna believe it."

But Norman it assuredly was, and Eileen banging away at the other bag, brushed a mist of hair from her forehead and turned to the Doctor, brown eyes dancing impishly and a riot of healthy color in her cheeks.

"Wait," she said proudly, "until you see Roger! Whirlwind, isn't he, Lucia?"

"Whirlwind!" nodded the other twin and with that Roger appeared unexpectedly from a coal bin where he had been adjusting a pair of tennis shoes, and strutting about with an acrobatic exhibition of muscle, suddenly fell tooth

and nail upon a punching bag and to a whistled obligato by the twins pummeled away with such terrific earnestness and energy that the Doctor's jaw dropped and remained dropped till Quin, laughing so hard he was forced to wipe his glasses, led a cheer that was worth considerable commendation in itself.

After that the Doctor felt he could not reasonably be astonished at anything.

"No doubt at all about it, Agnes," confided the Doctor late that night, "the lads are nothing like so fat. The two of them are becomin' so mortal sturdy and muscular I would not have believed it. And just to think, lass, I had a finger in the pie myself. For 'twill all be growin' out of my brewin' the peck o' maut. If I hadn't dabbled a bit in Cupidin' and sent Leddy Rose out to Larry in the moonlight, I wouldn't have thought of marryin' t'other lads and lasses off; and Norm and Roger would still be fat. My schemie already has accomplished a deal of guid."

But Mrs. Glenmuir merely said: "Poor Larry!"

"Dear lass," said the Doctor with moist eyes, "every string I pull is leadin' toward him!"

Intensely and romantically active, Norman organized an orchestra to bring the Doctor's lads

and lasses more frequently together and, horrified at the thought of meeting Carol, Lloyd found himself swept into it with the others.

From the Weston attic Marcia and Sonia disinterred a battered cornet and a trombone, relics of a fraternity orchestra in school days. June applied her musical aptitude to a French horn that hung idle in Jerry's studio, and Carol, catching the contagion, stealthily acquired an ocarina and was presently discovered in the cellar gymnasium consulting a small book and making a variety of mournful, dove-like noises.

The twins settled their problem one Saturday afternoon upon the roof of the barn to which Lisbeth had deputed them to mend the shingles. All repairs from plumbing on were referred to the twins.

"Lucia," began Eileen, vigorously hammering a nail into place, "just what do you think of a bassoon? Like 'em?"

"Fine instrument," nodded Lucia. "I almost always watch the bassoon man in an orchestra. Fascinating."

Eileen produced another nail from the pocket of her sweater and eyed the shingle.

"Well, now," she exclaimed, "that's gratifying, I declare it is. Most gratifying. I was a little afraid you might not care for it." And

of one accord the two fell to hammering again, whistling away at the inevitable duet and making such a clatter on the barn roof that Rose looked out, smiled and waved encouragement.

"Eileen," said Lucia as they scrambled nimbly over the roof to another hole, "what do you think of bass fiddles? Like 'em?"

Eileen liked bass fiddles quite as well as bassoons and said so, whereupon the embryo musicians regarded each other with quizzical amusement.

"Our minds most always run the same, ever noticed, Eileen?" laughed Lucia in delighted surprise at this eternal fact.

"Often!" nodded Eileen.

"Bassoon it is then?" queried Lucia as they slid from the barn roof.

"Bassoon it is. Bass fiddle for you, Lucia?"

"Bass fiddle for me."

This ambitious choice was received by Roger and Norman with gales of laughter and later the pair departed on a secret expedition during which they acquired an ancient bassoon which Norman insisted upon disinfecting and a mammoth bass fiddle, both of which were dispatched to the Weston home.

And then indeed the echoes awoke! The trumpeting of the others was quite lost in

the throaty quack of Gargantuan ducks and the distant boom of cannon that rumbled forth from the southwest bedroom, and when at last the twins with their musical giants took their places in the orchestra, they were radiant with the pride of achievement and jointly boomed forth a very creditable though periodic bass.

At the first rehearsal of Norman's terrible orchestra, Lloyd and Carol met—to Lloyd's utter consternation. For Carol's skirts had lengthened and her thick black hair, graduated from its girlish dressing like the rest of her, lay heaped in a shining mass upon her head, adding vastly to her height and to her beauty. Catching the mockery in her eyes, Lloyd burned with dismay at the memory of his high-sounding speeches to the indignant little girl on Ginger's back. Carol's womanhood somehow colored his advice into the rankest of presumption. But Carol was elaborately sweet and polite to her disturbed rescuer and an armed truce sprang up between the two, much too carefully concealed for the others to suspect or question.

It was an enthusiastic orchestra, this circle of the Doctor's lads and lasses, with Jean at the piano and Bob looming large behind a piccolo. But when at last Grant rapped professionally upon his music stand for the "attack," the

cataclysm of sound he evoked was encouraging, to say the least, though to be sure Quin promptly clapped his hands over his ears with a groan of dismay and Rodney emerged from the studio in nervous inquiry.

The Doctor sat stoically through an evening of it but his homeward comment was remorseful.

"Roderick Glenmuir," he sternly apostrophized himself, "ye have been verra proud and sinful, I notice, about havin' a finger in the energy of the two lazy fat lads; but now ye can just remember for a bit of penance that ye are likewise partway responsible for that fearful orchestra! Ye can not with fairness blame it all upon Norm. Guid faith, I did not know so many strange sounds *could* go scallawaggin' about the same house. 'Tis a verra guid thing Jerry's janitor was not about. And my, my, my! Poor Rodney's nerves!"

But it was not a time for lengthy courtships, warned the Doctor, with poor Larry in exile. So, after Norman and the terrible orchestra had cemented the schemie, a call went forth to the Music Box and the Cave; and the Doctor's lads assembled around a midnight pot of coffee, with Norman backing the Doctor's romantic proposition as a loyal henchman should and Roger dealing fat black cigars around like so

many cards. And above stairs Mrs. Glenmuir listened to the booming of the Doctor's voice with foreboding.

So eventually the Doctor's lads went forth pledged to romantic assistance in the untangling of Larry's wooing and the Doctor impatiently awaited the outcome, hoping that he had thrown a "stone into the pool" whose ever-widening circles would presently lap the shores of Syria.

## Chapter 17

*Tells a tale of a borrowed shirt — how once more  
Lloyd is sent to rescue Carol, and  
the startling result*

**G**RANT," said Quin, auditing the week's accounts, "how much was spinach your week?"

"Oh, Lord, Quin," snapped Grant, "shut up! Can't a man read his paper in peace? Hereafter when you're housekeeper I'm going away. You've driven Lloyd out of the room and right here's where I go too!" And Grant gathered up his pipe and papers.

"If I was satisfied to charge up the week's deficit to 'Inexplicable Eccentricities of Domestic Staff' the way you've entered it here in your week," Quin shot after him huffily, "we'd never get things untangled."

"Quin makes me tired with his system," grumbled Grant, rambling into Lloyd's room and seating himself by the window. "Where you going?"

"Out!" said Lloyd, dabbing at his hair with a pair of military brushes.

Grant's eyes widened. "My Lord!" he exclaimed, aggrieved. "There certainly are some splendid grouches abroad this morning."

With a clatter of discarded brushes, Lloyd fell to jerking open a series of bureau drawers.

"Wonder what particular catastrophe interfered with the distribution of the laundry this week?" he demanded. "Ye Gods! I never have a shirt. Get your laundry, Grant?"

"Naw. O'Hagan forgot to send it."

Lloyd stared in blank dismay at his companion.

"Borrow one of Norm's shirts," advised Grant. "He's got most a million. Socks and ties to match 'em, too. And Norm's shirts are lots less horizontal since he got thinner."

To which Lloyd made no reply, merely wheeling indignantly to summon O'Hagan.

"Hell's bells!" muttered O'Hagan in the kitchen. "The young lad has no shirt. 'Twill likely be that he's callin' for." And bolting from the room he presently returned with a shirt from the Cave, by no means an unusual proceeding when O'Hagan needed anything.

Lloyd donned the offering in disgust, his disappearance immediately preceding Norman's scandalized arrival in the Music Box.

"Who in thunder shanghaied my lavender

shirt?" he sputtered. "It's my favorite. Of all the nerve —"

But O'Hagan drew the indignant visitor into the kitchen with a gesture of apology.

"The young lad was goin' out," he whispered, "and I rummaged a bit. Don't stir the lads up about the laundry, Mr. Norman. Since Mr. Larry sailed, they're that irritable 'tis no trouble at all to stir 'em up over trifles."

So Norman graciously permitted himself to be mollified and later dispatched a generous margin of shirts to the Music Box to cover the shortage in laundry.

"Can't I see what the trouble is over there?" he confided darkly to Jerry and Roger. "Don't I know? They miss old Larry. I do myself. It's the vacant chair, that's what it is! The silent cello — the empty bed —"

"Dry up!" commanded Roger. "It's my day of rest."

"I'm feeling blamed gloomy myself," admitted Jerry, rumpling his black mane. "And by thunder!" reverting bitterly to a grievance of the night before upon which he had been harping since breakfast, "if Quin jumps down my throat again for leading my ten spot when the ace was out, in an unexpected fit of — of momentary depression and absent-

mindfulness, I'll harness my skill in pinochle to another partner."

Whereupon Jerry rose and moodily added the incident to his mural collection, deriving an immense amount of satisfaction from the criminal expression he contrived to impart to Quin's countenance.

Now in very truth things had not been going well at the Music Box since Larry's departure. There was a gap in the good-fellowship of the string quartette and the bed-time rubber of bridge. Moreover, the Doctor and Bob dropped in but infrequently, and Lloyd, conscious of a business responsibility to which he deemed himself unequal, had grown nervous and irritable seeking to bolster a resolution he had made the day of Larry's sailing and to whose fulfillment he set himself clad in Norman's shirt.

"It must be they haven't realized!" he reflected, striding north with a frowning glance at Norman's stripes. "There's really no other excuse for them. If they haven't — Well, it's clearly up to someone to tell them. And certainly there's not a fellow in the crowd save myself who is capable of a sane, unsentimentalized viewpoint where the Weston girls are concerned."

To the echo of many church bells Lloyd

swung up the Weston walk, pleasantly conscious of the Sabbath quiet which drowsed about the house.

Rose, crossing the lawn from the garden with an armful of nasturtiums, hailed him.

"Good morning, Leddy Rose!" said Lloyd, relieved somehow by the cheerful music of her voice, and the deference Rose always awoke in him, flashed up in his eyes as he smiled down at her, frankly expressing his admiration for the picture she made laden with flowers. Backgrounded by the old-fashioned welter of garden flowers and the dark of the rambling house, she seemed an incarnation of the home spirit framed in a mellow coloring as quaintly individual as herself.

"The nasturtiums *are* splendid, aren't they?" said Rose. "They're so brave and sturdy. No matter how somber the day their corner in the garden is always aglow with cheer. Carol and I are quite alone," she went on to Lloyd's dismay. "June is playing Beethoven in the cathedral this morning and mother and dad and the girls went with her." And Rose opened the screen door. "You'll find Carol under the apple tree, reading. Suppose you go rescue her while I dispose of my nasturtiums."

Groaning inwardly, Lloyd obeyed. Rescuing

Carol, he reflected, was a task of uncertain outcome. Wherefore, as he rounded the house and caught the white flutter of Carol's gown beneath the apple tree, he had a mind to retreat before she saw him.

Dame Fate decreed otherwise. Carol raised her eyes and closed her book and Lloyd was suddenly aware that the girl's scarlet tie was no brighter than the color in her cheeks. Moreover the vivid dash of color was a magnificent foil indeed for the lustrous jet of her hair and eyes.

"Good morning, Knight of the Borrowed Steed!" she called lightly with scarcely a trace of her usual irony.

Considerably astonished, Lloyd bowed.

"What ho! my desperate Damsel in Distress!" he countered smiling and Carol in turn realized that this annoying phrase bore in it utterly unsuspected possibilities of cordiality.

Pleasantly conventional, Lloyd seated himself on the ground beside her and for the first time in their unique acquaintance, the velvet-gloved feud seemed in danger of collapse.

So it was that Lloyd, gratified at Carol's cordial serenity in his presence, passed quickly from pleasant platitudes to a more personal recitation of his difficulties at the office, thence

adroitly to the topic of Larry's exile and presently to a very apologetic but determined explanation of his errand.

Now in his sincere desire to alter the course of destiny, Lloyd at first was mercifully unaware of the indignant amazement in Carol's black eyes but when at his earnest assurance that he begged her pardon but certainly circumstances had seemed to warrant a friendly suggestion or so, she wheeled upon him with smouldering eyes and cheeks aflame with scarlet, he halted aghast, conscious at last that his blind unloading of stock had terribly altered the market.

"And do you mean to intimate," demanded Carol, "that you have deliberately come here this morning to tell me how selfish my sisters and I have been—to hint that Mother Rose has been nothing but a slave to us?"

"I am sure I was not quite so rude," urged Lloyd. "It is merely that—well, you have all been very busy and I don't think you realize just what you have been taking from her. Don't you see, Carol—"

"Miss Weston, if you please!"

"Miss Weston, of course." Lloyd bit his lip. "I beg your pardon."

Now Carol was very young and very indignant and so after a resentful silence, she

ventured one or two imprudent personalities about the ways of gentlemen that brought the blood to Lloyd's face, for the Ridgelys were a little vain about their gentlemen. In an instant he was upon his feet, towering wrathfully above her. Panic-stricken Carol shrank back from the anger in his eyes.

"Since you are pleased to be so frank," he said, growing very white, "permit me to follow your example. Let me assure you first that I came here this morning out of loyalty to my chief and regard for your sister and not merely to annoy and insult you. It has seemed to me for weeks now that I could not stand idly by and see Rose sacrifice her own happiness and Larry's when a word from me might arouse you all to the thing as it is. Surely, *surely* you have not realized of your own accord! The fault, as I see it, is not merely your father's. It lies, too, with every one of you girls who have had your home and your youth made beautiful by the gentleness and self-sacrifice of your sister. Rose is so tireless, so cheerful and patient, that you do not realize how heavily you have harnessed her to the plough.

"And now, when the crux of her life comes, she is terribly conscious that everyone of you is leaning upon her. It has all been delightfully

easy for the rest of you. Each one of you went your way, living as you wished, but what one of you ever stopped to think what she has put behind her with never a word? What one of you would sacrifice for her what she has so willingly sacrificed for you? Here are six of you, mature, efficient, intelligent women! Surely together you could mold this thing aright if you would, instead of standing idly by, serene in the knowledge that your home life will continue to glide smoothly along in its comfortable groove with Rose at the helm, smiling and cheerful, to be sure, but with God knows what heartache underneath.

“Oh, yes!” he stormed as Carol stared, “*I know she cares!* How I know is of no moment now. Moreover, I know her worth. Do you? Year by year you have gone calmly on, accepting her as the logical handmaid of your domestic needs, as a necessary and comfortable factor of your existence. Do any of you know what you have really had in her? A beautiful, God-given miracle — an inspiration! You will know that perhaps when you have killed her among you. You are blind, every one of you! Do you think she is iron that she can lay aside her youth, her ambitions and even love, and go cheerfully on to the end, smiling? How much

has she done for you and what have any of you ever done for her? We men of the South are taught to revere a woman. Why, my mother never enters a room but that Dad is instantly upon his feet. He would not dream of sitting while a woman is standing and here — ” his eyes blazed indignant reproach at her — “here I have seen Rose get up to give your father the easiest chair. . . . And he took it as his due!”

With set lips Carol rose.

“Permit me,” she said stiffly, “to escort you to the gate!”

Lloyd wheeled, scarlet with humiliation. Insolently courteous, Carol kept beside him to the gate, angrily elated at the manner of his going. So, like an irate spinster who has found her youthful nephew stealing jam, Carol marched her humiliated adviser to the street.

“Let me thank you,” she murmured sweetly, “for your forcefully expressed interest in our family affairs. It is refreshing to find one who is so youthful and at the same time so — so considerate. And permit me,” she added maliciously, “to remark how well you are looking in Norman’s lavender shirt. It is vastly becoming.”

Raging, Lloyd flung off up the street. A borrowed horse that other day and now a bor-

rowed shirt! His face grew hot. Ridiculous climax indeed to his ranting! And bitterly anathematizing the distinctive pattern of the lavender shirt and the Fate that, he now remembered, had made it Norman's favorite, Lloyd recalled his high-sounding advice to the indignant little girl on Ginger's back and felt that he had acquitted himself no better to-day.

As for Carol, she hummed carelessly as she turned back up the walk but later in her own room she flung herself face downward upon the bed with a sob of realization. For Carol had fancied Larry's fate but the inevitable outcome of Rose's gentle immunity, but now, with the truth before her, she sobbed passionately in remorse. Dear, dear Mother Rose, with her cheery forethought for them all! How blind they had been indeed!

Pleading headache, Carol kept to her room until nightfall, alternately aflame at the memory of Lloyd's indignant rebuke or choking back her tears at thoughts of Rose. As for her sisters, they too must know of Rose's sacrifice. With the relieved thought of laying the problem before the clear-headed sanity of Marcia and Sonia, Carol rose and brushed her hair.

Now, insistent goad to her resentment came the picture of Lloyd, handsome, masterful,

indignant, as he had towered above her beneath the apple tree, and her face flamed. Once again she had lost her temper under the level scorn of Lloyd Ridgely's eyes; once again she had acted like a "little girl." And then out of the confused memory of the morning one phrase rang clearly in her ears:

"Here are six of you, mature, efficient, intelligent women!"

"Six of you . . . *women!*" For the first time since the morning Carol smiled.

Came the echo of the evening church bells through the dusk, the clatter of china and silver below stairs and the laughter of girls and men larking, in accordance with a weekly custom, over the preparation of the Sunday supper. Carol slipped noiselessly to the stairway and listened.

"For Heaven's sake, Sonia," came Marcia's crisp tones through the clatter, "don't let Quin put so much mustard in the rarebit. Grant, you cut the bread. Jerry is carving wedges."

"Oh, very well," came in gloomy scorn from Jerry; "see if Grant can do any better. Do, by all means. I've already cut my finger."

Then the usual consultation of the twins.

"Lucia, just what sort of sandwich would you like to-night?"

"Well, now, Eileen, I'm inclined to favor lettuce."

"Excellent suggestion! Roger, get the lettuce."

No, reflected Carol, Lloyd had not dared to come after all. Conscious then of another gap in the chatter, she leaned intently over the railing. Why, Rose was not there either, busy, ever-present Mother Rose! And hurrying to her sister's door, Carol knocked and entered.

By the window, a quiet figure in the dusk, Rose turned, her startled fingers tensing upon a letter in her hand.

"Headache better, dear?" she questioned. But Carol did not answer. For there was something in Rose's voice to-night that hurt her throat, and with one of the old, passionate impulses of her childhood which only Mother Rose had understood and condoned, she flung herself on her knees and buried her face in Rose's lap, shaking and sobbing so violently that Rose bent over her in alarm.

"Carol, what is it? Are you ill? Is your headache so much worse?"

But Carol merely shook her head and Rose, slipping her arm gently about the girl's shoulders, wisely waited for the storm to pass.

"I — we — did not know," Carol was saying.

incoherently. "Larry's going — it — it seemed like all the others. Rose," her voice trailed off in a sob, "I am going to take your place and keep house for mother —"

But it was like Rose to make no pretense of misunderstanding when the truth lay so clearly before her. So, bending over Carol with that wonderful touch of motherhood which each of her sisters knew so well, she began to speak — with what effort of will no one but herself knew — of the reasons why her course was after all the best.

It was a sincere and simple expression of Rose's viewpoint and Rose's call to duty, and when she finished, her face white in the kindly shelter of the dusk, Carol shrank back appalled at her glimpse of Rose's many chains.

"Nevertheless," she faltered bravely, "I — I am going to try to do that all for you, Rose. In time, I'm sure —"

But Rose's refusal to accept her sister's offer was cheerful and emphatic.

"Why, Carol," she reminded, "you must remember how young you are, how much you hate housework and — forgive me, won't you? — how little after all you know of it. And then there's the academy course just begun and your elocution plans all coming along so splendidly.

And, besides, Mother and I are the only ones who can manage that dear little imp of a Tavia. It's more than good of you to offer, but, believe me, dear, my way is best."

Carol clung to her in new rebellion.

"Oh, Rose," she cried, "why, why is not our family life like others — with — with Mother here —" but Rose laid gentle fingers upon the girl's impetuous lips.

"You must try to see, Carol," she said quietly, "that if there are some things which seem — well, not so normal and well-balanced as they might be, there are others which make the scale swing true and even. Surely in all Auburnia you will not find so happy and congenial a family as we."

Rose's will was of splendid fiber. How much it had cost her to keep her voice tranquil and even, Carol never knew, but now as the younger girl hurried away to bathe her face and eyes, Rose watched the door close with tired eyes. A letter slipped from her hand to the floor where it lay a patch of white in the dusk. Mother Rose buried her face in her hands with a strangled sob of grief and self-reproach, for the contents of the letter had been brave and reassuring and the postmark — Syria.

## Chapter 18

### *Tells of a midnight meeting in the Attic Nursery*

AND that," finished Carol very quietly, "is why I asked you to come here to-night when the house was quiet. It has seemed to me all day that the rest of you should know."

In the silence the clock upon the nursery mantel struck twelve. Outside a round September moon rode high above the barn, showering the orchard with silver. It streamed brightly in at the attic windows to fall full upon the sober faces of Rose's sisters. To this old attic room, which, littered now with Tavia's toys, had framed the romping days of every one of them, they had come at Carol's command, to sit huddled upon the floor in the moonlight while she talked.

June was the first to speak.

"I am blaming myself," she said, "for not suspecting. I am home here more than the rest of you."

"You have been busy with your music," urged Marcia fairly. "There is no one of us more in fault than the others."

"We have all been too busy," said Sonia, "to realize that Rose is even busier. Lloyd was right. We've been taking things too much for granted. I—I'm afraid we've harnessed her to the plough without a thought of what it might mean to her. As for not knowing her worth, there I think he's wrong. To me Mother Rose has been a wonderful, a beautiful inspiration! I think that's true of all of us. It is even less to our credit, knowing her worth as we do, that we have harnessed her so." Marble-white in the moonlight, Sonia's profile seemed that of a stern and beautiful goddess. "I have not forgotten," she added, "how Rose insisted upon my college course when the family could ill afford to let me finish. Anything, everything I have accomplished came through Rose's faith in me and her readiness to help by paring down expenses."

"It was the same with business college for me," nodded Marcia. "Rose would have it that Mother's secretary must not be handicapped for want of training. I'd almost forgotten it, I must admit, but it was to provide funds for me that Rose eliminated the family dressmaker and took her place, how efficiently we all know."

Deeply stirred by these bits of reminiscence June bit her lips courageously.

"Now when I stop to think of all Rose has done for me," she faltered, "I wonder that — that I haven't been decent enough to think of it before. I — why — every bit of music I have, Rose taught me. And I — I haven't done a blessed thing for her."

High-strung and emotional June began to cry and there was a general stir. June's and Carol's flashes of temperament, frequently commingled as they were with tears, were mildly unpopular with the others.

"Oh, come now, June," protested Marcia, "you're wasting nerve force. It's not hearts we need to-night as much as heads."

"We need a judicious mixture of the two," flashed Carol. "You and Sonia run too much to head. I'm just beginning to realize what it must have meant to Rose to give up her art course and step into Mother's place with Tavia seven months old."

"Suppose," reminded Marcia, "that we get right down to the business in hand. We're wasting time. To-night it's not so much what Rose has done for us, I take it, for she's left an unforgettable imprint on the lives of every one of us, it's — what have we ever done for her? What are we going to do for her now? Here she is — too busy to indulge a single personal

interest. Loving books and too busy to read them, loving music and too busy to play save when she's needed to accompany someone else — ”

“ Loving Larry,” put in Sonia, “ and too busy to marry him.”

Marcia nodded.

“ Keeping house for us all in that wonderful, clear-headed, scientific way of hers,” she went on, tabulating Rose's many duties upon her fingers, “ balancing her books each week as rigidly as a bookkeeper, buying like a professional buyer, scrimping, pinching, paring away expenses, mothering that imp of a Tavia and dressmaking for Carol and Tavia and herself, patching and darning for ten people and doing all the baking and fussy cooking to boot, to say nothing of the job of official adviser to all of us. Great Guns! Let me tell you it takes brains and grit and endurance to manage like that. Where she finds the time for it all I can't pretend to see. And, moreover, though the Lord knows how, she's contrived to save enough this year to have the barn shingled and to contribute along with the rest of us toward that infernal loan!”

All this while the twins had sat huddled side by side upon the attic floor in stony silence,

petrified by horrified realization. Now in the hush that followed Marcia's tribute, they faced each other with grave, accusing eyes.

"And with all those things to do," said Eileen, "you, Lucia Weston, went and asked Rose to wash my sweater herself for fear it would shrink! And she did it."

"Guilty!" owned Lucia bitterly. "What's more, Rose has been ironing my linen coat herself for a month now because you, Eileen Weston, went and told her Mrs. Marony ironed creases in it. Moreover, with brazen nerve both of us went and asked her to draw the plans for the cellar gymnasium. And she did it!" and the twins turned shocked, remorseful faces upon the others.

"All of which," said June, "merely goes to prove that Rose never seems to hurry, that no matter how busy she is, she can always seem to find time for something else."

"It is clearly up to me," said Sonia, her eyes grave. "I'm the oldest after Rose and though Rose's niche at home here is — is peculiarly her own and there isn't one of us clever and keen and patient enough to fill its complicated needs as cheerfully and efficiently as she has, still there's not a ghost of a doubt in my mind that Rose must be liberated and I am willing to pay

back something of what she has done for me by trying to fill her place. I remember Rose once told me that anyone could learn housekeeping, but that *homekeeping* was quite a different art. I'm beginning to see what she meant. It takes temperament and genius and tact to color home memories with unfailing cheer and cover the domestic machinery so the family won't hear the wheels creak. No house is a home without some vital womanly personality at the head of it. The system and machinery of housekeeping I'll probably analyze in time. About the elastic financing and the homekeeping end, I feel less confident."

"I am home here every day," broke in June tremulously. "I can't see at all that it's up to you, Sonia. By pruning the week of music pupils, I can take Rose's place."

"Lord, no, June!" objected Marcia. "You'd never do. You're too temperamental. The Weston finances need a business head. I can see plainly enough that Mother will have to get a new secretary. That might come in time anyway."

Sonia shot a startled glance at her and both colored and looked away. Unaware of a certain guilty stir among her sisters, Carol began to speak.

"It's not merely Rose's feeling of indispensability we have to fight; it's her temperament and her conscience, her loyalty and her iron-clad sense of duty. She told me she would not have any of us making unnecessary sacrifices for her — that by temperament and experience she was Mother's logical understudy, that she had fully made up her mind to stick by her to the end. Lloyd was rude enough to say that not one of us would sacrifice for Rose what she has so willingly sacrificed for us. I think he's wrong."

"Love and marriage," said Sonia with a peculiar inflection of her voice whose significance was not lost upon four of her listeners. "That's what Rose is giving up. Very well. If Rose is going to stick so bravely to Mother, I am going to give up love and marriage too and stick to Rose. It's only fair."

"And I," said Marcia with white lips, "I am willing to do that too."

"And I," faltered June, throwing herself face downward upon the floor with a choking sob.

Brown eyes ablaze with loyalty to that dear older sister whose life of sacrifice they were but imperfectly comprehending to-night, the twins turned silently and shook hands.

“And Eileen and I,” said Lucia bravely.  
“We’ll stick too.”

Thus Fate in the corner of a moonlit attic ironically knotted the threads of destiny that led to the Music Box and the Cave.

## Chapter 19

### *The Doctor's lads*

**G**UID faith!" burst forth the despairing Doctor, staring aghast at the glum faces of his lads, "I canna, winna believe it! 'Tis such a bit of news as a man canna accept off-hand. Ye canna mean, Jerry, lad, that the Weston lasses have sacked the lot of ye?"

And Jerry, who had been wildly raking his fingers through his hair, suddenly clenched them with a hollow groan and seemed about to lift himself into mid-air by hirsute straps.

"Life's under dog!" he boomed theatrically. "Fate's puffball! Cupid's donkey! How the Gods must laugh to-night at Jerry, derelict upon the storm-tossed sea of Life! Was it not the logical outcome of anything with which Jeremiah Colson became affiliated? The breakfast herring, the missing sock—do they not tell their own cruel story of an ever-busy Nemesis who pursues me like an ogre? Never Grant—never Roger—never Quin or that ass of a Norman—Oh, no! Always Jerry, easy mark for the imps of hell! Who is the

butt of Quin's sarcasm over pinochle? Jerry! Whose musical gymnastics does the janitor dislike most? Jerry's! I may not even gather water fern for Rose without complete and unexpected immersion in a wet and watery pond. Jeremiah II. Book of Lamentations Number Two. Faugh! Fate must have whispered the direful name in my mother's ear. And everybody, everybody, mark you, has my number, from Roger's office boy on. Didn't Larry up and send me a postal from Syria of the Grotto of Jeremiah? And what was it? Of all the God-forsaken, barren, gloomy holes, I've never seen its equal. Anything with that name must feel it in time. I don't wonder the original Jeremiah wrote his Lamentations there. I would myself if it wasn't such a devil of a journey. Even my hair and my eyes, mark you, were made of the somber hue of mourning crepe, Nature draping me at birth for the sorrows of life! Even in the Cave Trio, the melancholy oboe must needs fall to me, doubtless because it wails like a banshee and is said to put a crimp in a man's brain."

Jerry relapsed into gloom, moodily biting his finger nails, and the Doctor stared with circular eyes and a paralyzing sense of guilt at the crestfallen faces of these lads who had come to

grief in the pursuit of his schemie. For once his ready tongue was mute; a melancholy silence fell over the office until with a sniff the conscience-stricken Doctor roused.

"I'm sittin' about here," he said bitterly, "like a daffy peacock who, havin' just had his fantail snapped off sudden by a meddlesome cyclone, does not know where to go a-lookin' for the first feather of it. 'Tis just so with my wool-gatherin' wits. I'm fair stunned. Where's Norm anyway?"

"Norm," said Quin, "is making a fool of himself. He's talked a lot about the picturesque way Larry took his congé — as if Larry himself ever gave it a thought! And so to-night what must Norm do when he left Lucia but make for Gallagher's, borrow Rajah and go galloping like a fiend out of town without a hat, hair blowing and his eyes staring wildly ahead of him like a lunatic. Said he might shoot himself and he might not. It was after all an unpleasant way of shuffling off — but whatever he did to-night he'd certainly go explore the Everglades of Florida to-morrow, for there were noisome parts there where a man couldn't live."

Now like a devil's tattoo along Auburnia Avenue came the thud of hoofs and Norman himself bolted into the office, met the hostile

eyes of Grant and Quin and bolted out again with a shudder, muttering that even his friends had turned against him and that he was now about to precipitate himself into the Auburnia River and remain there in watery seclusion until he became a "bloated corpse."

Staggered by Norman's meteoric visit the Doctor bounced in alarm from his chair and made for the door.

"Let him go!" advised a disgruntled chorus, but the Doctor had no such inhuman intention.

"I canna have my guid henchman scallawaggin' about the river a 'bloated corpse'!" he snapped. "The poor lad's noddle is all topsy-turvy. For all his Hamfatters' ways and his tragic sense of romance, 'tis only a vent for the poor lad's excitement. He's just as upset and skedaddled as any other man among ye and ye just canna tell what niffy-naffy proceedin' he'll engage in next." And hatless and excited, the Doctor was off, tearing after the shadowy coat-tails of his henchman, whose confused sense of direction was somehow leading him away from the river.

"Merciful patience!" panted the Doctor, mopping as he ran, "Norm has been a fearful responsibility, a fearful responsibility indeed! The Brimstone Hornie himself must have

pestered me into enlistin' the daffy lad's aid. Still, I canna with decency refuse to rescue him for matter of that, for in many ways he has been an uncommon guid henchman and I owe the poor lad something for the fact that he has been hit so sorely with a boomerang of my makin'."

So Norman permitted himself to be rescued from a watery grave many a block away from the river and while the Doctor was thus employed, Grant had risen from his chair in the office, supremely disgusted with Norman's pyrotechnics.

"Norman," said he, "is making comic opera of something that is of vital and sacred concern to all of us. I'm going home." And he fretfully departed, followed by the others.

Outside Rajah standing by the curb whinnied plaintively at the sight of them and of one accord they halted, Quin offering Jerry the task of riding the horse back to Gallagher's. But Jerry, who professed to see in this but a trick of Fate to facilitate the predestined breaking of his neck, instantly declined and strode on homeward, to sit in bitter meditation on the doorstep for lack of a forgotten latchkey, while the disgruntled trio returned the unpopular romanticist's steed in a body.

"Oh, Agnes," groaned the Doctor late that night, "'tis all over with my wonderful schemie. My pernicious peck o' maut has now become a bushel! And, Oh, Agnes, my sinful heart is just fair burstin' with remorseful torment. For I have not only upset Larry and my poor dear Leddy Rose but I have muddled the lives of a dozen of folk all told just by my fearful efficiency in meddlin'. If the Hornie himself had told me, I would not have believed the lasses could have acted so. 'Tis plain I have been too much of a meddlesome Cupid with my sinful and persistent braggin' about straightenin' things out for Larry. Agnes, lass, I'm a verra wicked man cursed with a degraded taste for meddlin' and matchmakin' but I will not meddle with the great schemie again. Like a Roman candle 'tis over prone to periodic explosions. From now on, I'm a sawbones and nothing but a sawbones."

So the deadlock came — with the Doctor's lads variously veiling an inglorious sense of eclipse — with the Doctor's lasses buoyed up by an exalted sense of martyrdom at which Carol, feeling herself the cause, stared aghast — with Lloyd, guiltily reticent, fighting a stirring of conscience under a heavy pressure of work.

Now as Rose had said, a secret sense of

abnormality had over-developed the clannishness of the Westons, strongly riveting family ties of loyalty and obligation and concern for one another and making them immune to the need of outside friends. So now with a tribal facility for bending their energies to a common center, Rose's awakened sisters paid their self-effacing tribute to the sacrifice of Mother Rose as Rose, in turn, had paid it to her mother. Filled with remorse at the memory of the careless years behind them, squarely facing at last the singularity of Mother Letty's position in the home, there came to each one of them a deeper, more sympathetic insight into Rose's rejection of her freedom.

"I can see now," said Sonia, "that Rose could no more desert Mother Letty in the circumstances than we could desert Mother Rose. The singularity of our home life chains us all to one another and we have been more than blind not to see it before. Rose with her clearer vision saw it right along. Moreover, I can see very plainly now that marriage was never intended for such a family as ours."

Brave and lofty young martyrs! It was astonishing the obstacles to marriage they one by one unearthed to fortify their courage. There was Rose, of course, first of all, and then

the overshadowing loan with its constant drain upon them all, Marcia's indispensability as her mother's secretary, Sonia's editorial career, the congenial home-unity for which they were so noted, Mother Letty's right to an unbroken family circle after the cheerless harness of years, June's undomestic temperament and the utter inseparability of the whistling twins. It was a black and hopeless case indeed. Cupid, on trial for unseemly intrusion, found himself indicted and spurned by this brown-eyed, fair-haired, inexorable jury of the Doctor's lasses.

So Rose found herself relieved of a task here and a task there and wondered greatly, unconscious of the stirring of conscience unleashed by Lloyd and Carol. To Sonia, to Marcia, to June with their offers of freedom, to the twins who had solemnly come to her with a paralyzing plan to run the house together, her answer, though she had found the effort of facing this promiscuous knowledge of her love and sacrifice a desperate one indeed, had been the same, gentle but unrelenting. So Mother Rose's loyal sisters bravely betook themselves to a life shorn of camaraderie with the Doctor's lads, shedding many a tear in secret; and Rose, forced to the reluctant conviction, after a host of unsatisfactory interviews with her sisters, that Larry's

friends had gone the way of other suitors, resigned herself to the loneliness and quiet of the house and asked no further questions. For even as Rose herself had guarded her mother from the knowledge of her sacrifice, so were the others guarding Rose.

## Chapter 20

*Relates something of a cribbage session and considerable gossip*

**F**IFTEEN two — fifteen four — fifteen six!" Colonel Huntley laid aside his cards. "Well, Peter, what's all the delay — what's all the delay? Can't you count?"

"My delay," apologized Judge Caperton, "is due to a slight and somewhat hesitant inclination to sneeze."

"Have just one of my fearful stogies," advised the Doctor. "It may help ye out, Peter."

"Harveyized snakeroot!" said Colonel Huntley. "That's what started him off sneezing in the first place. Smell 'em myself. Peter, if you surrender to your fussy notions of politeness and take one of those infernal weeds, you'll get hay fever and, what's more, you'll deserve it. Ragweed and rubber; nothing else."

"Oh, dinna blether so, Colonel," put in the Doctor. "Ye talk like a haverel!"

"And what in the name of blue-black-blazes is a haverel? Scotch barbarism. . . ."

Well, Peter, hustle up there, hustle up! What's the verdict?"

"You'll pardon me, Roderick, I'm sure," said Judge Caperton pushing the box away, "but I did take the liberty to-night to bring along one or two of my own cigars. They're no better than yours — indeed no! quite the contrary, I'm sure — but they are a bit milder." And the judge betook himself again to his cards.

Now it is a most regrettable fact that the colonel and the judge had been following the progress of the schemie with an avid interest made possible by the Doctor's confidential indiscretions over cards, secretly affording him that stimulus of sympathy and encouragement which Mrs. Glenmuir had deemed it wise to withhold. So to-night, with a warning glance at the open door through which floated the half-hearted orchestral effort of his lads, the Doctor whispered the utter collapse of his schemie.

"You don't mean it!" said Judge Caperton in low tones. "Why, Roderick, I *am* surprised."

"Most amazing!" Colonel Huntley raised his bushy, snow-white eyebrows. "What are you going to do about it, Roderick?"

"I'm stumped," owned the Doctor, "just fair stumped. I canna see my way clear and my

Agnes, she's all for me droppin' the schemie straightaway forever. To be perfectly truthful, I canna see any other way myself. . . . Would ye just listen to poor Jerry in there pipin' away at the Dead March! Colonel, would ye be so guid as to close the door. The lads have been swarmin' about the Hame since the Westons sacked 'em, tootlin' and musickin' fierce with my Jeannie, account of lonesomeness I take it. I joined 'em once or twice myself with my bagpipie but I canna say 'tis overpopular with the lads, though for matter of that ye canna blame 'em. The bagpipie with all its undoubted merits has an overbearin' trick of drownin' the rest out and monopolizin' all the solo parts at high speed because I dinna like to stop once it's goin' guid for fear it will not be so easy to start again. Ye will probably perceive that such monkeyshines make every solo a duet. And then, plague take it! when the lads all shut up and give me a chance to display myself alone, the daffy thing sulks fearful. Your deal, Colonel."

"My deal! It's always my deal. ' I've dealt three times running. Pass 'em to Peter."

Peter mildly protested, the Doctor discarded the pack with a sniff and the colonel with an imprecation of disgust shuffled and dealt.

“And Larry?” said Judge Caperton with interest. “He’s coming around, you say?”

The Doctor glowed.

“Peter, I’m just so mortal proud of the lad and his splendid courage that I must brag a bit about him. ’Tisn’t so much that he’s comin’ around, I take it, as ’tis that he’s got a grip on himself. Such cheerful, pleasant letters ye would not think to read, with never a hint in ’em of the poor lad’s heartsick fancy for the dear Leddy Rose. . . . And what must Larry do with his thoughtful kindliness of heart but go look up Benny’s old home in Beirut that Benny had told him about — Ben, the tailor — and snap-shoot some pictures of it, a queerish house with a flat roof. And he snap-shoots a score of other places in Beirut where Benny had played as a bairn, along with a picture of Benny’s uncle, an old Syrian with wrinkles aplenty and a beard over a foot long, neither verra hygienic. All these pictures, mind ye, Larry he packs off to me to give to Benny. And bless ye, Benny just stops short pressin’ troosers, with the tears a-streamin’ down his face, and he chatters daffy-like and wrings his hands and pats me on the back — all the while scorchin’ Peter Stowe’s troosers — for which I was not sorry, not abidin’ the man. And Benny

he was so mortal pleased with the sight of home and the unsanitary uncle that he clean forgot to rag me about my troosers as he will do if they're but a wee bit baggy. 'Tis like Larry, God bless him. I've a notion this grief will maybe temper the lad a bit. Mayhap 'tis what he needs, though I would have done the temperin' a bit different. He's a turbulent lad for all his quiet manner."

But the conversation was becoming far too placid for the colonel.

"And with the collapse of the schemie Rodney is forever entrenched in the Throne Chair with the family at his feet. Great pity!"

"Aweel," snapped the Doctor, "the situation is abnormal and so too is the man. I wash my meddlesome hands of it."

"Abnormal!" exclaimed the tantalizing colonel. "Oh, come now, Rod, you can't exactly call him abnormal."

"When a man is so mortal full of I's," punned the Doctor sarcastically, "would ye not say yourself he was abnormal, a sort of optical monster, maybe?"

"Oh, get along with you!" grumbled the colonel. "I'm tired of your everlasting similes. A potato, for instance, is not an optical monster. Peter, play ball."

With due precision Peter played ball while his cronies bickered about similes, potatoes, optical monsters and Rodney.

"Let us hope," ventured the judge, interposing a wedge of tact, "that the unfortunate man will presently awaken to a sense of his responsibilities. Surely he must be aware that his present form of life bears — er — blemishes."

"Blemishes! Bless your conservative heart, Peter, ye put it mildly. The man has a freckled soul. Ye mind, Peter, how any woman with disfigurin' freckles will always tell ye 'tis only the verra finest skin that freckles? 'Tis just so with that gowk of a Rodney! He knows well enough that his soul is specked thick with freckles but he concludes that they have come upon it on account of a hyper-exquisite soul fiber. Anyway I've a notion the man looks at himself through smoked glasses for fear he will dazzle himself with such uncommon brightness and splendor. Colonel, dinna stir me up again. Ye have a fearful habit of amusin' yourself with such crafty tricks."

"Most amazing proceeding," remarked the colonel after a quiet hand or so, "for Ben Raegner to up and die after the primaries with his name on the ticket and the politics of the town in such a beastly muddle. Roderick,

coming up here to-night, I met Driscoll. He says you're the only man in Auburnia to fill the place, that you'd make a bully mayor. Says he's going to head a petition to the election board to run you in on the ticket."

"Mayor! God bless my soul!" snapped the Doctor. "I have no time for fancy work."

"Fancy work!" The colonel stared. "Well I'll be hanged!"

"There's not a man in Auburnia can keep the Democrats out of office this fall," pointed out the Doctor, "and the Republican candidate for mayor is but a figurehead to give a convincin' air to the ticket. I would fill the vacancy with a guid undertaker to help bury the party hope. Myself I have no time to assist with the buryin'."

"Well, well, Roderick," said the judge with a twinkle, "you are a pessimist. But he's right, Colonel, no gainsaying that."

The Doctor sniffed.

"Aweel," said he, "pessimist I may be, doubtless, but I dinna mind. There are no pleasant surprises in life for the optimist. For the pessimist, things always turn out a lot better than he expects."

"Well, now, Roderick," urged the colonel expectantly, "since you haven't any time for

political fancy work, there's your friend Rodney! He'd make an uncommonly good substitute. Presence, dignity, magnetism, he lacks none of the qualifications for an imposing dignitary. Moreover, your friendly influence would insure his victory."

"The *verra* thing!" broke in the Doctor elaborately. "The *verra* thing! 'Tis a brilliant whig-ma-leerie for a sane man to have in his noddle. Colonel, the suggestion is a credit to your political instinct. And my! my! my! what a bonny figure he would make, to be sure, leadin' the city parade on old Molly's back and paintin' little artistic jim-cricks on his pasters. I am filled with mortal pangs of envy. And Letty would supply him with abundant campaign money and Benny would have to make him a picturesque electioneerin' suit and the Leddy Rose would attend to his tortured nerves and write his speeches — and I would doubtless put poison in his nerve medicine and turn Democrat!"

He was silent for some time.

"Hum! Since the man just could not win with the Republicans in such bad favor, 'tis not such a whig-ma-doodle notion after all as I fancied at first." The Doctor laid down his cards in excitement. "D'ye know what would

please me?" he demanded fiercely. "I would give much to see man Rodney upon the ticket to be humbled in guid time by a scorchin', blisterin' defeat. I would give more to have Reddy Gunnigan with his mud-slingin', slanderous Democrat pen, tellin' what the Republican candidate is, how the selfish gowk is nothing but a parasite livin' upon the bounty of his womenfolk and all puffed up with his own conceit and ruinin' lives offhand with the splendid indifference of an emperor. Folks, I take it, dinna fuss much over domestic offenders unless there is something spectacular to wake 'em up. And such a bitin' editorial about King Rodney as Reddy writes when he's delvin' in that nasty way of his into the private life of political opponents, would stir the whole town up.

*"O wad some power the giftie gie us  
To see oursels as ithers see us!  
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,  
An' foolish notion:  
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,  
An' ev'n devotion!"*

"Let Rodney once know that the scathin' eyes of the town are full upon the canker in his home and mayhap he would lose a bit of his

monumental self-assurance and emancipate the loyal slaves of his household."

They were careless words, hotly colored with the unhappy events of the schemie and, like many another plan for Rodney's downfall, spoken with absolutely no thought of fulfillment. But they fell fatefully this time upon wild and fertile soil, in the course of time to flower forth abundantly.

For beyond in the kitchen of the Hame, O'Hagan had come a-visiting, maliciously aware that his popularity with Jamie was a galling thorn to Flora. To considerable imprudent advice upon the making of coffee, O'Hagan, nothing daunted by a sniff or so, had presently added the well-intentioned effrontery of seizing a tray and while Jamie was eyeing him in alarm and Flora serving the hungry orchestra, the irresponsible Irishman departed for the cribbage room with the Doctor's coffee, delighted with his furtive opportunity of serving the benefactor who had installed him in the kitchen of the Music Box.

That he halted outside the door without entering was due to the fierce indignation of the Doctor's voice booming forth Rodneyan abuse to his cronies; that he lingered and listened and eventually retreated — to surrender the unde-

livered tray to the quaking Jamie — was due to curiosity and the sound of Flora's approaching footsteps.

## Chapter 21

*In which the reader finds himself in a doubtful place and doubtful company but must bear with the indignity for purposes of the narrative. The chapter ends more reputably*

O'HAGAN departed, after a tormenting shaft or so at Flora, rehearsing with interest the Doctor's tirade. Curiosity and excellent ears had made him master of much in the Music Box and O'Hagan was loyal. Small wonder then that he endorsed the Doctor's fire-eating. Moreover it pointed a way to repay the Doctor's favors by serving the Doctor's whim, stirring O'Hagan's resourceful brain into daring inspiration.

So O'Hagan went striding away through the maze of streets toward the river, irresponsibly committed to a scheme of his own whose initial fulfillment led him to the family entrance of Karl Schafer's saloon.

It was essentially German in its respectability, this comfortable back room of Karl Schafer's, a place where Germans met and drank and smoked over endless hands of pinochle; where

Frau Schafer nightly clicked her knitting needles and drowsed in comfortable consciousness of the goodly repute Karl maintained here at the occasional expense of his temper; and where in a secluded corner the great Michael Morough drank his beer from a private stein and puzzled disgustedly over the German mottoes on the smoke-darkened walls, received peculiar guests by appointment and inconspicuously held a sort of court which settled the political destinies of Republican Auburnia.

Now Michael Morough himself was not globular of waist line like the conventional boss of the cartoonist; neither did he wear megaphonic plaids to impress his satellites. He was rather the ultra-respectable director of a vast political orchestra which variously brayed or boomed as he nodded, made all his noise for him and paid him for the privilege. Thin, sardonic of face and humor, he was long of memory for favors or abuse.

It was this final characteristic upon which O'Hagan was banking as he seated himself at the boss's table after a greeting considerably more cordial than Mr. Morough usually permitted himself with the casual seeker.

"Have a drink," began Morough.

O'Hagan accepted.

"Ye mind, Morough," said he after a self-conscious prelude of pleasantries, "how ye did be peerin' into my kitchen when I was chef for Ganlon this twenty year back, a pinched, despairin' hulk of a lad wid wild eyes and the two feet of ye bare on the frozen snow?"

Morough nodded.

"I'm not likely to forget it! Lord, how the wind blew!"

"And how ye swore I saved your life by fillin' ye up then and there wid soup?"

Morough's eyes were friendly.

"Well," said he shrewdly, "what am I to do to-night to pay for the soup?"

O'Hagan's jaw dropped in consternation.

"Ye've a habit of comin' straight to the point, Morough!" he stammered, annoyed.

But there was no side-stepping now. O'Hagan desperately took the plunge. Morough heard him to the end in some pardonable astonishment.

"Man," he said, "you're mad! It can't be done, of course. I'm sorry —"

"But Raegner himself was weak!"

"To be sure, but he had powerful Democratic friends and we were counting on him to split the vote. There was at least a fighting chance. Now this man you mention. What's he ever

done? I know of him, of course; he's strong on looks and big talk, but he's not the man to help the party."

"Have ye personally picked Raegner's successor, then?"

"No-o-o-o," admitted the man who would ultimately name that accidental dignitary to the election board, and his face grew non-committal, "not exactly. Raegner's death was so infernally unexpected that I'm all at sea. I'm sorry, O'Hagan. I've often thought of that pot of soup and there's been none like it since; but I can't compromise myself by picking a dead one."

"'Tis a big thing I'm askin'," owned O'Hagan, "to pick the candidate for mayor for a pot of soup but —" he leaned forward and played his final card in an excited whisper, breathing a magic name and a no less magic insinuation.

"In God's name, man," exclaimed Morough, "why didn't you hint something of that before? It puts a far different face upon the matter. If you can swing Dr. Glenmuir's influence —"

"Are not the two families of them intimate friends, a-visitin' back and forth?" evaded O'Hagan fluently. "Did I not hear him say wid me own two ears to-night that it would

please him more than he could tell to see the man on the ticket? Would I be here otherwise, claimin' payment for the pot of soup, only that it will please him who doctored me free and set me on me two feet a while back?"

"Another pot of soup!" said Morough dryly. "We've a chain of them. Dr. Glenmuir is the one man in Auburnia with sufficient personal influence to lead the Republicans to victory this fall—the one man, I say, in this God-forsaken mess of political blunders who could stampede the city into enthusiasm."

And Morough instanced the Doctor's secret work in Cleton, Auburnia's squalid settlement across the river, where clad in a baggy homespun, reserved for this occasion and never pressed, he weekly made a round of charitable calls behind old Peggy.

"If Dr. Glenmuir would consent personally to head the ticket he'd sweep the town like wildfire and get the solid Cleton vote though it's Democratic."

"He'll not be takin' the opportunity," vouched O'Hagan.

"I'm well aware of it. Just before you came I phoned him at Driscoll's suggestion; for plain talk, by the way, give me a Scotchman every time. He refused flatly to name anyone in

whom he would feel the slightest political interest. All of which, as you can see for yourself, makes your information a tip from the inside. What is it, Adolph? . . . Telephone? . . . I'll be back in a minute."

Returning he stared frowningly across the table.

"O'Hagan," said he, "I don't quite see your game, hanged if I do, but things are swinging your way. Raegner's Democrat friends have just deserted. I don't mind telling you now that we hoped they'd stick if we offered them the selection of Raegner's successor but they regard his death as unconditional release and have gone straight Democratic, pledging their support to Horton. All of which means that we're badly stung unless your man can come solidly to the front with Glenmuir's influence behind him and do all that you claim for him."

"You mean?"

"I mean that I'm going to give your man a chance. By himself I think he's worthless but even at that we're not taking much of a risk now. We may lose with him. We certainly lose without him with Hogan's gang seceding in a bunch. However, you want him, Dr. Glenmuir's strong, and you're the first man in my experience who ever waited twenty years

to collect a debt. . . . Well, here's to the new mayor!"

O'Hagan drank, dazed by the unexpected turn of the political wheel. And craftily pledging Morough to secrecy, he departed, an incognito gear-wheel in the boss-ridden machine of Auburnian politics.

So by a freak of political destiny, a pot of soup and a daring insinuation which he could not back, O'Hagan repaid a debt of gratitude and irresponsibly fired the fuse to a startling train of events, political and otherwise.

And by an open fire in his wife's room, for the autumn nights were growing chill, mercifully unaware of this new act he had all unwittingly "loosed upon the world," the Doctor was mildly adjusting his reading glasses and beaming at his wife, his ranting forgotten in this quiet hour by the wood-fire. For to-night was Mrs. Glenmuir's birthday and for years now there had been a favorite poem which Doctor Rod needs must read to his wife on her birthday night.

So — surely not the same Doctor who had sarcastically held forth upon the subject of King Rodney with flashing eyes and biting tongue! — he presently began to read, his face aglow with feeling.

*“ John Anderson my jo, John,  
When we were first acquaint,  
Your locks were like the raven,  
Your bonny brow was brent;  
But now your brow is beld, John,  
Your locks are like the snaw,  
But blessings on your frosty pow,  
John Anderson my jo.*

*“ John Anderson my jo, John,  
We clamb the hill thegither,  
And monie a cantie day, John,  
We’ve had wi’ ane anither;  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
And hand in hand we’ll go,  
And sleep thegither at the foot,  
John Anderson my jo!”*

The Doctor wiped his glasses.

“ Ah, Agnes,” he said, “ ye were a bonny lass! ”

Readily alternate indeed, the Glenmuir temper!

## Chapter 22

*In which the cribbage trio with excellent reason goes into highly scandalized session and the Doctor gloomily triumphs over a terrible temptation*

IT was very simple. A word here and a word there, a purring note from the political orchestra as the great director nodded; a sleek, frock-coated delegation who ostensibly represented the political preference of Republican Auburnia and came in reality from Michael Morough, and Rodney, to his gratified amazement, was launched into the whirlpool of local politics.

When the election board, instructed by Morough, made the appointment and the newspapers blazed with the name of Raegner's successor, Auburnia read and gasped.

As for the startled cribbage trio, it went into immediate session disclaiming all culpability in the matter of Rodney's selection.

"I *am* surprised!" said Judge Caperton. "I am indeed. And I did find it somewhat difficult, Roderick, to believe that you would embark

upon such a spectacular performance as you suggested the other evening, but, dear me, it — it's altogether a most mysterious coincidence. Most mysterious!"

"Amazing!" said the colonel. "Most amazing! I can't believe it."

"Amazing?" The Doctor mopped his forehead in despair. "Man alive, 'tis so mortal weird I'm afraid to think about it. And so prompt on the heels of my bletherin' about it! If my thought waves are becomin' so fearful strong that I canna gab a bit without manipulin' things unconsciously with telepathic suggestion, why I just winna dare think any more. That's all there is about it! Maybe I'll presently be creatin' telepathic panics with my notions on the tariff and the currency system. There's no man in Auburnia so mortal prone to gettin' in pickles as myself. Ye just canna conceive, lads, what a start it gave me after our talk of the other night, to find man Rodney on the ticket. And the two of ye heard me tell Morough I would not dabble with his dirty politics no matter what he might say."

But no amount of head-wagging over cribbage solved the mystery and before long the Doctor and his cronies had a shock before which Rodney's candidacy paled into insignificance.

Reddy Gunnigan threw his editorial hat into the ring with a Gunniganesque blare of trumpets and type and told Auburnia just what he thought about the Republican candidate for mayor. It was forcible, it was abusive, it was offensively personal, such a ranting editorial in short as Auburnia had come to expect from Reddy Gunnigan who, backed by the liquor interests of the county, was yearly upon the grand jury list for libel, each time to be acquitted after farcical investigation.

But in many ways this vicious attack upon King Rodney was his masterpiece. It bared vividly the parasitic home-life of Raegner's successor, his insularity, his selfishness, his egotism; all in an ingenious commingling of insinuation and stated fact through which one glimpsed a brutally accurate picture of the peculiar situation at the Weston home.

By those most intimately involved it was variously received. Michael Morough opened his paper and reached for the telephone, demanding of O'Hagan many unanswerable things. Why, for instance, he personally had not been appraised of the hidden gap in his candidate's armor through which Gunnigan had thrust? To which O'Hagan, for reasons of his own, made singular answer, curtailing a sentence amidship

in ingenious imitation of a severed phone connection and thereafter ignoring the insistent ringing of the operator, who was seeking to placate Morough.

At the Weston home, Rose read the Gunnigan editorial with burning face and anger in her eyes and slipped away to the kitchen under the watchful gaze of Lisbeth, to burn it, unaware that the one person in the house who hated Rodney had read and bought a copy of her own. What mattered it if Rose herself was aquiver with shame at the pitying allusion to herself and Mother Letty? Here at least was something from which Father Weston must be shielded.

At the Hame o' Roses, where the Doctor read with bulging eyes, vigorously wiped his reading glasses and read again, to sit in petrified silence at the end, the telephone wires began to hum. Obviously, in the light of this second coincidental thunderclap, there had been imprudent leakage somewhere!

He found the colonel at home, fully aware of Gunnigan's new revelation of depravity and explosively positive of his own innocence. And the colonel said with a sputter of excitement that Peter was at that minute hurrying up the walk at an amazing rate of progress for him, a

paper in his hand — could see him through the window!

“Get him on the wire!” snapped the Doctor. “I would talk with the two of ye.”

“Peter,” roared the colonel, flinging up a window, “hurry up and use Bob’s private wire in his own room, so the three of us can talk. Annie will let you in. Roderick’s on the phone and blue-black-blazes, he *is* in a state!”

So the cribbage trio bickered by telephone without clarifying the mystery in the least, sometimes talking singly or in twos and sometimes all at once.

“Now, now, now, Roderick,” broke in Judge Caperton once, “I protest, I really do. My court training has disciplined me to a habit of silence and I’m not prone to such indiscretions, as you know.”

“He’s right, Roderick. He’s amazingly close-mouthed. I am myself. Now you —”

“Why,” intervened the judge hastily from Bob’s room, interposing his inevitable wedge of tact, “I actually started so when I read Mr. Gunnigan’s effusion that my glasses simply popped off my nose. Chipped considerably too. And, dear me! I fear I made an exhibition of myself bolting up here to Bob’s house to see if he’d read it.”

Then the colonel from the library:

"It's merely a most amazing coincidence, Roderick. Take my word for it."

And from the Hame o' Roses:

"'Tis altogether too weird and uncanny for a coincidence, man, but I canna help seein' now that neither of ye have been gabbin' about loose as I feared. Canna ye drop in to-night, the two of ye? We must talk this thing over or I winna sleep."

And as the alarmed cribbager whose ranting had been so peculiarly prophetic, rang off, he stared again at the news sheet.

"I dinna think," he mused, "that I have ever read a more perfectly truthful thing, for all its nasty, insultin' way of puttin'. Doubtless the dear Leddy Rose will burn the paper; I know the lass's ways. . . . Hum. . . . 'Twould be a pity if she did, a great pity, for I would not have Rodney miss the readin' of that for anything. And yet. . . . Hum. . . . Letty and the lasses will of course guard him from the thing as if 'twas smallpox. . . . There's no use beatin' about the bush. I must see that the conceited gowk gets a glimpsie of it!"

The Doctor marked the article, enclosed the paper in a mailing wrapper and with absolutely

no attempt to disguise his handwriting, boldly directed it to Rodney Larimore Weston.

“Roderick Glenmuir,” he said, “few would guess that your old mother and your preachin’ father were pious, respectable folk who did not hobnob with the Hornie. I have scant use for ye, as I tell ye frequent, for ye have a depraved and pryin’ nature and would doubtless be in jail but for the heroic efforts of your leddy to keep ye from it. And have ye not promised the dear Leddy Agnes but a week back that ye would drop your meddlesome ways for guid and all and be nothing but an elderly sawbones with a bit of dignity and a fairish crease in your troosers? And have ye not always abhorred the sneakin’ man who would mail such a thing as that?” And with a snort the Doctor tore the paper into shreds.

“For once, Roderick Glenmuir,” he added gloomily, “ye have conquered your sinful impulses — but ’twas a verra great temptation! And now I must buy another paper so Jeannie and the Leddy Glenmuir can read about the King.” But had the Doctor known that the newsboy he presently hailed from the window had sold an extra paper to O’Hagan and O’Hagan had mailed it to the King; had he known that Lisbeth, awaiting an opportunity

when Rose was busy, had taken the evening papers into the studio with her own copy of the *Auburnia Journal* uppermost, he would have felt distinctly better.

So in spite of Rose's determination to suppress the item, it came at last to the handsome eyes of Rodney to be read by him with unexpected tolerance and understanding. After all Rodney rarely did what his family expected.

"Letty, my dear," he confided to his wife that evening, "I really do think you are troubling yourself too much about this puerile bit of yellow journalism. A man in the public eye such as myself must expect this sort of thing. It is inevitable. Savonarola, Martin Luther — were they not reviled in much the same manner? Why, Martin Luther, my dear, had his writings publicly burned. Imagine that! And moreover the public was constantly prying into his private life because he had married a nun. And there are lots of similar cases. As for the man's ridiculous aspersions upon my art, I really do not think it is fair to expect such an arrant Philistine as Gunnigan to have any nice understanding of art and genius and the exemptions to which they are surely entitled."

Martin Luther and Savonarola! How the Doctor would have snorted. But Rodney,

blinded to the brutal truth of the attack by the glamor of a distinguished martyrdom, likened himself to many another great victim of popular abuse and slept soundly that night as surely a man with a clear conscience should, while Mother Rose lay white and wakeful until the opaline flush of the dawn beyond her window brought memories so vivid that the girl turned her face away from the east with a sob. And Mrs. Weston, shaking with a nervous chill, listened to the regular breathing of her husband and thanked Heaven for his conspicuous common sense.

## Chapter 23

### *The test of Bob's philosophy and its result*

SO much for those most vitally concerned in the travesty of Rodney's political notoriety. At exactly five forty-five of this eventful twilight, Dame Fate majestically stepped into the ring with a silken strand of destiny all ready for interweaving and decreed that the most spectacular results of Reddy's slanderous article should come from an unexpected quarter.

To Bob Huntley smoking in his office after the rush of the day, the emissary of Destiny came in the person of one Ned Curtis, a clever young friend of Bob's who reported the sporting events with slangy pen, worshipped Bob and shuffleboard, and persistently stirred up a conservative family circle by tardy arrivals to dinner.

"Hello, Bob," he hailed his chief from the doorway. "Looked over the *Journal* yet?"

"No," said Bob. "What particular brand of bandit am I to-night? Or am I merely a gentle idiot with more ballast than brains?"

"You're shamefully neglected! No mention

of you anywhere. Reddy sputters all over the sheet to-night about the Westons. Read it. Great Scott, it's a hummer!" He entered and proceeded to unfold a paper. Bob captured it and looked at his watch.

"Don't bother to sit down, Ned," said he. "I distinctly promised your mother that you wouldn't hang around here and gossip with me after the rest of the bunch have gone. If you must play shuffleboard before dinner, go early and get it off your mind."

Ned departed, obviously disappointed. Left to himself Bob carelessly opened the sheet of his rival and began to read Mr. Gunnigan's frank opinion of various things that were none of his business.

So long as Gunnigan confined himself to offensive dissertation upon Rodney, his art and his politics, Bob, inured to his rival's irregular notions of journalism, merely shrugged, but at the first allusion to Mrs. Weston he removed his cigar from his mouth and turned fully around to the light to make quite sure he had not mistaken the portent.

There was worse to follow — a veiled allusion to Larry and his exile — to that bevy of fair-haired, brown-eyed daughters who helped make King Rodney's home a palace of cheer he did

not deserve — to Rose and her selfless servitude to the whims of her father.

As he read, the tolerance with which Bob was accustomed to read Reddy's malicious effusions about himself collapsed for all time. For the first time now he saw his rival not as a harmless exponent of ridiculous journalism, whose shafts had splintered upon the armor of his own philosophy, but as a contemptible coward who had made political capital of the sacred intimacies of life, riding roughshod over the innocent to spectacularize the guilty; who had dragged into the limelight of press-publicity people to whom Bob himself was intensely loyal: Mother Rose, that gentle, cherished friend and schoolmate to whom as the beautiful tapestry of the girl's winsome womanhood had unrolled itself before him he had given a wondering sort of reverence and awe; Larry, first and finest of those friends Bob made so easily; and Mrs. Weston.

White with anger Bob read the article again, tensing the fingers of his powerful hands unconsciously. Panoramic memories of Reddy's insults, less humorous now in the light of Bob's new vision, danced mockingly before him. . . . Gunnigan's abuse and his own philosophy. . . . There had hinged his fate with Jean.

Gunnigan! Gunnigan! Gunnigan! Bob's heart beneath the splendid muscles of his chest seemed pounding it in rhythm. Arrogant meddler in the privacies of existence! Glib-tongued parasite of the liquor interests! The brutal assailer of Rose's life of sacrifice and Larry's shipwreck!

Bob reached for his hat.

How eventually he made his way through the streets to the *Journal* Building and filed past the deserted desks to Reddy's private office, he never fully recalled. He only knew that Fate smiled upon him. For Reddy, with the six o'clock whistles shrilling a message of release to the workaday world, was bending over some extra work upon his desk and whistling.

Bob halted in the doorway and stared through narrowed eyes at the big, raw-boned, crafty-faced Irishman who had risen and changed color at the sight of him, and the office flashed for one baleful instant the color of Reddy's hair, then with a roar of fury Bob literally dropped himself upon the frightened Irishman and bore him sputtering to the floor.

## Chapter 24

*Which concerns itself with a gladiator and a  
hirsute battle-trophy, bandages and arnica  
and a telephone call, and tells how the humble  
gladiator made port, battered and elemental*

AT the Hame the grandfather's clock had boomed the half hour after six when the doorbell pealed. It was a prolonged, impatient sort of tinkle, and Jean, discussing the probable sources of the Gunnigan editorial with the Doctor, hastened away to answer it.

"Bob!" she cried, drawing back with a horrified gasp. But there was very little resemblance to the lazy, good-humored philosopher in this battle-scarred apparition upon the porch, with the swollen eye and bleeding lip; for the single visible organ of vision beneath his hatless mop of hair was flashing with the light of victory, his mouth was taut and grim, and Bob's white face, for all its stains and scratches, reflected terrible concern.

Jean stared at him in speechless inquiry, her fascinated eyes lingering upon the battle-trophy in his hand, an unmistakable lock of carrot-

colored hair which Bob was holding forth in mirthless satisfaction.

"Would you?" he demanded, "would you regard that as sufficiently *elemental*?"

It was a curious sort of glance, Bob thought, with which Jean met his eyes. There was humor in it and concern and something nameless and unfathomable which set his veins to throbbing queerly.

It remained for the Doctor, bolting into the hallway in a spasm of curiosity, to put into words Jean's own conviction. One thunder-struck glance at the vivid lock of hair in Bob's hand and the Doctor's excitement burst all bounds.

"Bobbie, lad," he cried, "dinna ye tell me that ye've trimmed Reddy Gunnigan and then come a-scallowaggin' here in such a fearsome state to fetch a flamin' lock of his thievin' scalp for a man to feast his eyes upon! I just winna believe it, lad. I canna believe it!"

"I have trimmed Mr. Gunnigan," said Bob, fixing his single visible eye upon Jean with burning intensity, "with beautiful and gratifying completeness. It was elemental — elemental in the extreme!" The Doctor's jaw dropped at Bob's toneless pride. "To be sure I may seem battered myself but I can cordially testify that

Mr. Gunnigan himself is in infinitely worse straits than I — *infinitely* worse! Mr. Gunnigan will apologize to the Westons in the columns of the *Daily Journal* and Mr. Gunnigan will in general, I think, mend his ways!”

Once more he dangled the hirsute battle-trophy before Jean’s eyes.

“Would you,” he insisted with deadly singleness of purpose, “would you consider that sufficiently elemental?”

“Fiddlesticks!” snapped the Doctor. “I don’t know what you’re bletherin’ about, Bob, but myself I can see plain enough that it’s no time to be a-wigwaggin’ Reddy’s scalp lock about and boomin’ so stern and solemn about ‘elementals’ to Jeannie with your one guid eye like to burn the lass up! What with your ragin’ and battlin’ about so fearful and burstin’ loose so unexpected when ye have been so perfectly mild and safe and respectable this many a year, ye’ve gone plumb daffy with the shock of it. Elementals indeed! Man alive, ’tis a time for essentials and nothing but essentials. And essentials in this case, I would have ye know, are arnica and bandages and a guid physician. Into the office with ye this instant and dinna ye go to boomin’ any more about elementals to Jeannie or wigwaggin’ that daffy bit of hair

until I have dressed your eye. Jeannie, if ye can manage to use your tongue again for the purpose it was given ye, and quit starin' so queer at your daffy gladiator, I would have Flora bring some hot water to the office straight-way and if the lad has not fussed ye out of your senses, I would greatly appreciate such assistance as ye can render. Now, Bobbie, lad, march!"

And "Bobbie, lad," marched to be scalded and antisepticized and linimented and bandaged by the Doctor's gentle hands while Jean hovered in the background, proffering scissors and bandages and drugs as the Doctor's grunts betokened their need.

"Hum!" The Doctor surveyed his patient with a glint of humor. "I canna say I have greatly improved your appearance, lad, with my bandages and my plasters, but I dinna doubt ye're a sight more comfortable and hygienic. Guid faith, what a bandaged fire-eater we have with us to-night, to be sure! Dizzy a bit, eh?" he added gently as Bob tried to rise. "I was afraid of that. Ye've lost more blood from the nasty cut on your forehead than ye would think. The edge of Reddy's desk, eh? . . . Hum. 'Twas a great service, Bobbie, ye did Auburnia to-night. I'm so mortal proud

of ye I could jig a bit if it was considered professional."

Bob stretched his battered bulk upon the office couch.

The telephone rang.

"Hello," said the Doctor. "Yes, ye have Dr. Glenmuir on the wire now. . . . Hum. . . . Hum. . . . Hum!" he cleared his throat with a rasp. "Verra well," he snapped suddenly, "I will come if, as ye say, ye canna get anyone else. I canna say *willingly* — but I will come anyway. That will doubtless be sufficient."

He turned brusquely away from the telephone, washed his hands at the basin in the corner and reached for his hat and case.

"Who was it?" asked Jean.

The Doctor avoided her eyes.

"'Tis one of the times, dear lass," said he, "when I must forget that I am a sinful man with sinful prejudices, and be nothing but a saw-bones with a little bag of surgical jim-cricks for mendin' a man's body while I seek with all my might to forget the color of his soul."

"And the patient?" Jean turned dark, accusing eyes upon the evader.

"Well, lass," said the Doctor as he rang for Jamie, "if ye must know the truth, 'tis none

other than Reddy Gunnigan himself. His housekeeper tells me that five of the doctorin' folk about winna touch him — winna even go to look at him, small blame to 'em, and the man is wrecked fearful. There is many a time, lass, when I would greatly prefer to be a gypsy tinker with a tent upon the roadside, a-mendin' pots and kettles instead of folks, and this is one of them. Jamie, lad, I would have the car quickly if you please."

"You're going!" Jean wheeled upon the offender with a loyal glance at Bob.

"Hist, lass!" thundered the Doctor, his voice surcharged with rebellion and annoyance. "I am a physician in guid standin' and the man is sufferin'. The Brimstone Hornie himself would go."

Bob's glance followed him with marked approval. As the door closed he caught Jean's hand and held it tightly to his lips.

"Jeannie," he begged, "I am a bit elemental, don't you think so? You can't imagine how elemental I've been feeling since I read that beastly editorial."

Jean's face flamed and her eyes had in them again that darkly golden flash of topaz. Biting her lips courageously she turned away. For somehow there was something about Bob as he

lay there helpless and humble for all his splendid strength of will and body, something about his ridiculous pursuit of the elemental that made her throat tighten oddly.

"I know I'm wonderfully proficient in the art of picking unromantic settings," went on Bob, essaying a smile that made him wince. "You've often said so. When my canoe upset and then when you were up in the tree, and there in the barn. The Lord knows I'm a poor sort of lover now with a bandage over my eye and a chain of plasters on my lip, but, Oh, Jean dear, if you could know —" But Bob looked away; for the feeling had surged over him that he dare not put his fate to the test again lest he lose for all time this girl he had enshrined in his heart since boyhood.

And Jean miraculously understood. After all there had been no lack of spirit. Bob had simply declined to take himself seriously. When Reddy's shafts were turned upon his friends, philosophy vanished.

So in one great thrilling flash came the true insight into Bob's nature and Jean faced the knowledge that even that day in the barn she had felt the warning stir of this force that bound her to him now. And Larry had always understood. That was a little galling. It was just



*Bob stirred uneasily and the girl dropped to her knees by the side of the couch with a laugh that was half a sob. "Oh, Bob, dear," she said bravely, "I have been a very great fool."*



as he had said. Bob's philosophy was his strength and not his weakness.

Bob stirred uneasily and the girl dropped to her knees by the couch with a laugh that was half a sob.

"Oh, Bob, dear," she said bravely, "I have been a very great fool. I would not have you different!"

## Chapter 25

*In which the Doctor finds himself the guardian  
of a startling patient and thereby a  
mystery is cleared up*

**F**RETFUL at the unexpected twist to the Gunnigan tangle, the Doctor had meanwhile arrived at his patient's house in Hart Avenue, disciplining his face to a stony mask of professionalism. But such impassiveness was foreign to the Doctor's nature and one glance at the groaning wreck upon the bed in Reddy's room shattered the resolution. The trimming of Mr. Gunnigan had indeed been accomplished with completeness!

Startled, the Doctor took immediate command. In a very few minutes he had dispatched the frightened housekeeper to the kitchen with a volley of directions.

"Reddy," he bluntly advised his patient, "ye might just as well quit swearin' and bouncin' about so wild, for ye will not profit by it and ye have considerable fever now. I canna pretend to get a guid look at your collection of bumps and bruises if ye will persist in monkey-

doodlin' about the bed like a wild man. Ye deserved every bit of the thrashin' he gave ye and ye know it well enough yourself. 'Tis a matter of verra great amazement to me that ye have not come to some such grief before this. Well, are ye done bouncin' about?"

Frowning, the Doctor bent over his patient and examined the many ravages of Bob's powerful and persistent fist. And now his mood changed.

"Steady, man!" he advised kindly. "Ye know well enough I will not hurt ye any more than I can possibly help. Ye're sufferin' badly here, eh?" and Reddy was conscious that hands, deft and gentle for all their strength, had found the agonizing pain along his shoulder blade and slipped the joint into place. Panting and sweating he fell back limply on the pillow, groaning afresh at the pain from a fractured collar-bone and a broken rib.

"More hot water and bandages here, Mrs. Byrnes," said the Doctor, working swiftly, "and still another roll of absorbent cotton, if ye please. I must have considerable more water too of about the same temperature and a bit of cracked ice in a towel. . . . Hum! I would greatly esteem it, madam, if ye would not stare so much and would hurry a bit more. The man is suf-

ferin' sorely. . . . A dim light now and a bit of order and ventilation. . . . Now if ye will be guid enough to find the nearest drug store — ”

Mrs. Byrnes departed and the Doctor went below to telephone his favorite nurse.

As he hung up the receiver the doorbell rang. It was Peter Caperton. The Doctor surveyed him in astonishment.

“ Roderick,” stammered the judge, concealing his own surprise, “ I have come here expressly to remonstrate with Mr. Gunnigan about his infamous attack upon the Westons. Really, you know, it is high time this sort of thing ended and as a citizen who keenly feels the obligations of citizenship, I feel called upon to protest. I — I consider it a blight upon the town's fair name, I do indeed. And — ”

“ Run along to the Hame o' Roses with ye, Peter, lad,” interrupted the Doctor, “ and wait for me there. I canna have ye reformin' poor Reddy to-night. I dinna mind tellin ye, though, that Bob has been remonstratin' with him fearful already and I think the poor man's had about all the remonstratin' he can stand for a while without verra disastrous results.” In a whisper the Doctor divulged some details.

“ Well, Roderick,” said the judge, staring,

"I *am* surprised. Young Bob, eh? My, my, it does seem incredible."

"Run along now, Peter," said the Doctor, closing the door. "I'll come when I can."

But the judge was not the only Gunnigan visitor whom the Doctor intercepted.

Came presently the clatter of a cane upon the porch and the Doctor, forestalling the peal of the bell, found this time a bristling caller whose eyes flashed fire beneath his bushy eyebrows.

"Roderick!" exclaimed Colonel Huntley. "Well, 'pon my soul, Roderick! What in blue-black-blazes are you doing here?"

The Doctor told him.

"Professional call, eh? Humph! Well, personally, I've come to thrash Gunnigan. Yes, sir," with a thunderous rap of his cane, "to thrash him — every inch of his contemptible hide. He's persistently insulted my Bob and I've been waiting some time for an opportunity to get him. Hadn't been for Bob I'd have had him long ago. Drag decent women into his dirty politics, will he? Well, sir, I'll show him what an officer of the G. A. R. can do!"

"Trot along with yourself, Colonel," exclaimed the Doctor. "Ye're talkin' loose. Bob trimmed Reddy this hour back and ever since I've been a-sewin' and patchin' and rivetin' the

poor man together again. Ye will doubtless find your warrior offspring in the office with my Jeannie fussin' over him, but I would advise ye not to let his mother see him without a tactful bit of preparation, for the lad himself, no matter how ye may turn him about, is a bit unsightly. Get along to the Hame with ye now, Colonel. I canna leave my patient alone so long. And dinna slather so with your cane."

And final visitor of all, with the nurse installed in the sick room and the Doctor about to depart, came O'Hagan. Through the excited outburst which followed his fruitless demand for Reddy, it came to light that O'Hagan too wished to remonstrate with Mr. Gunnigan.

"'Twas not the thing itself, ye understand," he finished. "'Twas the dirty, sneakin' way he wrote it up after me givin' him the facts to work with and trustin' him to act a bit discreet with 'em. Ye can wager your last cint on it, if I'd guessed what he'd be doin' with the story, I'd have thrashed him before the printin' of it instid of comin' here now to do it."

The Doctor's eyes flashed with peculiar interest.

"O'Hagan," said he crisply, "I'm mortal glad ye've come. Now ye will just trot obedient into this room here and tell me the truth about

this fearful mysterious editorial. Mind, man, I would have the whole story, just how ye came to be so queerly mixed up with the press and politicianin' and all about it."

Nothing loath now to unveil his scheme to the benefactor for whom he had planned it, O'Hagan obeyed. Long before he had finished, the Doctor's eyes were circular with dismay.

"O'Hagan," he gasped, appalled by the frank recital, "ye have just fair scandalized the heart out of me. Why didn't ye tell me this before?"

"'Twas best to be secret," said O'Hagan, "until I'd swung it all —"

"I dinna think," broke in the scandalized Doctor, mopping back his hair, "that I have ever heard of such a weird, madcap performance. And I must say ye have verra original notions about repayin' a debt of gratitude. Verra! Here am I a-scallowaggin' about Reddy's house protectin' him from the results of my own folly which ye have gone to the trouble of gratifyin' in such a peculiar manner. I winna gab any more about anything until I have first set myself down in a sound-proof vault! And then ye bolt in here of a sudden with your buttons like to burst off any minute, and tell me ye would beat up Reddy for carryin' out your orders. 'Tis a fearful muddle!

And so after hearin' all my reckless gabbin' with your ear to the keyhole, ye went to Morough and brazenly told him I would doubtless support Mr. Weston's candidacy. 'Tis verra difficult, O'Hagan, for me to get that through my noddle."

"I merely hinted it," corrected O'Hagan. "I told him that the two families of ye were good friends, a-visitin' back and forth, and Morough, not seein' where to turn his head anyway with Hogan's gang secedin', fell for it."

The Doctor shook his head in hopeless bewilderment.

"I will doubtless have to go into retirement and brood verra careful over this thing before I comprehend the full extent of your ingenuity," said he slowly, "but there's no doubt that ye've stirred up as much excitement as a mouse in a harem! What with offers to trim Reddy springin' up from the most unexpected sources, and Reddy with his carcass wrecked and myself a-quarrelin' with the colonel and the judge and accusin' 'em flat of babblin' about my indiscreet outburst of t'other night, 'tis altogether such a devilish schemie as the Brimstone Hornie himself might concoct. O'Hagan, ye're a rattle-brained Irishman and ye must drop out of politics as sudden as ye dropped into 'em. And

mind ye keep the whole fearful muddle under your hat!"

O'Hagan's face lengthened.

"'Tis not that I dinna appreciate your gratitude, man," said the Doctor kindly, "but ye've such a mortal queer way of expressin' it."

So at last the mystery was solved; but the Doctor's homeward comment was very gloomy.

"There's no man in Auburnia," he said, "so mortal prone to gettin' in pickles as myself; and there's no doubt my Agnes is right: It all comes from my meddlesome, clackin' tongue, deil take it!"

## Chapter 26

*A chapter of picturesque politics, of a tired and worried mother with slowly whitening hair and how Mother Rose grew even cheerier as the days went by*

AFTER the first shock of O'Hagan's revelation, the Doctor and his cronies, wagging their heads in session, settled back to await the revolutionary effect of the Gunnigan editorial upon King Rodney's life.

"For the man just canna side-step!" pointed out the Doctor. "D'ye see any way he can, Peter, lad? He must see now how others regard his conceited manner of livin' and doubtless he will find himself obliged to correct it and find a job if he does not wish to remain so mortal conspicuous. Maybe — God knows I hope it! — maybe the final results will compensate for this fearful notoriety into which Letty and my poor dear Leddy Rose have found themselves plunged so unexpected by the bletherin' indiscretions of a sinful sawbones. . . . Your deal, Colonel, and ye canna deny it."

But the revolutionary effect of the editorial

was somehow not forthcoming. As the days filed by, the Doctor's desperate hope that Rodney's notoriety would shame him, paled and flickered forlornly out, meeting, as the Doctor glumly hinted to his wife, the disastrous fate of everything with which Roderick Glenmuir, "sinful sawbones, meddler and matchmaker on the Hornie's staff!" was directly or indirectly associated.

For Rodney with conspicuous dignity serenely went his political way, a martyred but nevertheless frankly broad-minded victim of the rabid press, more and more blinded to his real position by the glamor of a growing sense of importance fostered in him by those political barnacles who were banking warily upon his slender chances of success.

"Oh, my, my, my, Agnes!" sniffed the Doctor. "I can see plainly now that I have made another great mistake, a verra great mistake. The man has less time to hunt a job now than he had before. What with his daffy art and his daffier politicianin', he's too mortal busy to work of course. Ye canna reasonably expect it. Poor, *poor* Mother Rose!" And the Doctor's voice was very bitter.

Unaware of the ripple of laughter and ridicule beneath the town's exaggerated air of

deference, Rodney strode politically forth to conquer, much in the manner of certain fiction heroes of politics whose adventures he was following with interest. He was jovial — this handsome candidate for mayor — he was magnetic; but Reddy's editorial had undermined his campaign at the start.

Mystified at the ominous political silence around the Hame o' Roses, Morough tried vainly to get in touch with O'Hagan; but the Irish gear-wheel had as irresponsibly dropped out of politics as he had dropped in, and the political top he had set to spinning, spun giddily on without him. Locks were good and telephones uncertain.

With the recantation of Reddy's editorial, the royal self-assurance of King Rodney flared into gorgeous blossom and convinced him at last that he was the idol of the hour. Only the busy women of the royal household felt the bitter sting of their notoriety. Rose, whose anxious eyes missed nothing, saw with a tightening of her throat that Mother Letty was growing pale and thin and that her hair was whitening rapidly from day to day. . . . So Rose's laugh grew sunnier and nights no shadow marred the welcoming cheer of her face.

Once Mrs. Weston, looking up into the brave

brown eyes of this loyal first-born, caught the girl wildly to her in a sudden impulse.

"Oh, Rose, child," she said brokenly; "Mother knows, dear —"

But Rose's splendid control did not desert her.

"Dear, *dear* Mother!" she said gently, smoothing back the soft white hair and ignoring the tears, "you're tired and upset, aren't you? And the day has been so windy and unpleasant. Let me make you a cup of tea and then you'd better lie down a little while before dinner. And Carol has such splendid news, Mother. Frau-lein is delighted with her elocution. And Tavia's teacher, such a pretty, pleasant girl, came to-day, and she says that Tavia, for all her impishness, is a dear, bright, lovable little kiddy. We knew it, didn't we? And, Oh, Mother!" Rose's voice grew very droll, "those dreadful twins are going to paint the house, beginning on Saturday and working in the early mornings. Isn't it funny! They've already invested so heavily in paint-brushes and ladders and paint pots that I simply haven't the heart to discourage them." Laughing through her tears, Mother Letty was borne away to a comfortable couch in a quiet room where a log glowed and crackled in the dusk, there to be cheered and petted and scolded over a refreshing cup of tea.

But Marcia had turned away, biting her lips as the two departed. For she alone had seen the throbbing, tell-tale veins in Rose's throat and the one swift look of agony in her eyes as she mutely met her sister's glance of sympathy. Surely those words of Mother Letty's had hinted some heartbroken knowledge of Larry's love and a passionate benediction for the girl's sweet and fearless strength in her hour of trial.

## Chapter 27

*Tells how the Doctor dropped in to see Davy  
and how he ripped out the buttonhole in  
Director Harvey's shirt-band*

AND the next day the Doctor dropped in to see Davy, an innocent enough proceeding in itself, but one so fraught with results that eventually its ever-widening circle of influence lapped the distant shore of Syria.

A lecture to the staff of St. Jerome's, of which in earlier years the Doctor had been a member, and a habit of dropping into Mrs. Weston's office whenever he was in town, were in this instance the strings which guided the Doctor to his goal.

It was raining when he turned into Broad Street, a gusty day of wind and gloom, and as the Doctor halted, per custom, to revel in the fevered activity of the Curb, a gale of wind seized his hat and bowled it around a corner, whence the disgusted Doctor promptly followed it down the street. Having clapped the elusive headpiece back upon his head, he stood looking

up at the skyscraper to which the chase had led him, raising ironic eyebrows.

"Hum!" said he, "I might just as well drop in to see Davy now that my daffy hat has led me to the verra door. I have promised him this two year and over that I would be droppin' in and now I will give the old Scotchie a start!"

Now Davy, the Doctor's friend, was by day an expressionless, opinionless, toneless, hyper-efficient automaton. In the offices of the Alabama Coal and Iron Company it was confidently believed that Davy had never in his life made an unnecessary motion, that he never permitted a single human ray to illuminate the bleak leather mask which the office force by courtesy alone called a face; daytime habits with which he had often longed to startle the Doctor.

What wonder then that the Doctor, making his way to Davy's desk at the heels of an office boy, stared in dismay at the gaunt, leather-faced apparition who swung slowly about in his chair and, despite an inner glow of satisfaction, regarded the Doctor with fixed, expressionless gaze.

"Davy, lad!" exclaimed the Doctor at last, more and more staggered by Davy's terrible air

of efficiency. "What would be wrong with your face, lad? 'Tis like nothing so much as a tough bit of leather. If ye have any regard at all for your old friend's feelin's, dinna stare at me so mortal stony. Ye give me the creeps. What with your jerkin' slowly about with such an air of machinery like an electric man, 'tis fair uncanny. I dinna believe I could stir ye up enough to wrangle with me about Karl Marx even. Where d'ye feel sick, anyway, man, or have ye gone daffy?"

"Hist!" warned Davy. "Would ye spoil my reputation in the office by talkin' so loose of Karl Marx? My business and my private life are verra different things, man!"

"Fiddlesticks!" snapped the Doctor. "Davy, lad, ye will come to the Hame this evenin' to be ozonized for your asthma and examined to boot. I dinna doubt ye have struck your head somehow. I winna get over this shock for many a day. Ye're a queer lad, no gainsayin' it, and I hope ye'll never let your old mother get a glimpsie of ye in this leathery state. 'Twould doubtless overcome her."

The Doctor's hectoring was interrupted by the hurried entrance of Davy's chief.

"Gordon," said the president of Alabama Coal and Iron, "phone for a doctor double

quick. Mr. Harvey's been taken suddenly ill."

Davy's expressionless eyes turned slowly upon the Doctor, then with a single automatic movement of his hand, palm upward, he brought his visitor to the attention of his chief.

The president, accustomed to Davy's elisions, glinted at the baggy knees of Davy's guest.

"You are a doctor?" he demanded curtly.

"I have been called so by indulgent friends," said the Doctor dryly. "And my state is guid enough to permit me to practice."

"Hum!" Eyes that glittered like polished points of steel glanced rather sharply at the Doctor, who reached for his pocket case of drugs.

And thus it was that Dr. Glenmuir found himself in the heart of a directors' meeting, bending over a rotund and frothing old gentleman in a semi-unconscious state who was plainly the over-excited victim of uncontrollable indignation.

With eight discomfited directors around him, the Doctor opened Mr. Harvey's collar, shook and pounded him generally and curtly called for water, which the president himself secured, considerably accelerated by the Doctor's impatient "Hurry, man! And dinna bring me just a thimbleful. I would have a quart."

Eight pairs of circular eyes watched the eventual disposal of the water—for the old

gentleman was a person of importance — and presently with a groan and a gurgle Mr. Harvey spoke.

“Forty per cent!” he sputtered, waving his arms wildly about. “Oh, my God! Infamous! Outrageous! A crowd of Don Quixotes in Wall Street!”

“Out of his head!” purred the president.

“The man has a fearful temper,” said the Doctor bluntly. “And if he gets himself in such a state again, he will doubtless have a verri bad attack of apoplexy. And now that he is comin’ around, ye’d better call a taxi and bundle him off home. I will give him a bit of medicine to calm his nerves but he will doubtless be as mad as a hornet when he finds how wet he is and that I have ripped out the buttonhole of his shirt-band.”

This final prognostication was verified to the letter. Then the Doctor, after a word or so with the Scotch automaton, who was efficiently procuring a taxi for Mr. Harvey, set out for Mrs. Weston’s office.

## Chapter 28

*Concerns itself with Mother Letty's office, with still another indiscretion of a certain Scot; tells something of the Colfax loan and how a broker on the floor of the Exchange made a purchase*

**H**UM!" The Doctor's kindly eyes wandered slowly about Mrs. Weston's comfortable inner office, lingered with approval upon Marcia and returned by way of the clicking, glass-covered instrument in the corner to his old friend's face. It was warm with welcome, as it always was when the meddlesome Doctor took it upon himself to appear in the office and bully Mother Letty about the dangers of overwork.

"Ye are doubtless verra busy, Letty, with the folks outside a-waitin', but I must just take time enough to tell ye that ye are lookin' verra tired and pale and nothing like so guid as ye should."

"That," said Mrs. Weston, smiling, "is the usual summary of your visits. A parrot could do as well."

"Parrot or no," insisted the Doctor, "'tis

mortal true to-day. I dinna like to see your eyes so sad and thoughtful. Hum. . . . Dinna ye mind the clickin' of that thing in the corner, Letty? 'Twould drive me out of my senses, jabberin' away so persistent."

The Doctor arose from his chair by Letty's desk and inspected the ticker with interest.

" 'Ala. C. and I.' " he read after a while. " Hum! That would be Alabama Coal and Iron mayhap. I have just come from there. I take it that some daffy bull or bear is a-sniffin' at coal and iron and gettin' ready to howl his head off, eh, Letty? Is it a frisky kind of stock, lass, zigzaggin' up and down frequent? "

" Not very," said Mrs. Weston. " Around eighty most of the time. David Gordon's with them, isn't he? "

The Doctor instantly dropped the tape and nodding in excitement described at some length Davy's unforgettable leather face.

" And then," went on the Doctor deliberately, " right about the center of our wrangle, in comes a fearsome man with gimlet eyes and verra fine creases in his troosers and he glints at Davy and demands with great haughtiness — a doctor! And Davy he dabs his arm out like the flail of a threshin' machine, with never a word, mind ye, and before I know well what

it's all about, I'm informally attendin' a directors' meetin' and dashin' water into the purple face of a daffy man who's gurglin' about forty per cent and Don Quixotes in Wall Street and has got himself worked up into such a rage as I have never seen before in my life. Harvey, his name, a man of inconceivable roundness of person with a thick, wattled neck and, if I dinna miss my guess, a thicker head!"

"Harvey!" Mrs. Weston flashed a quick glance at the Doctor but he was inspecting the ticker again and seemed not to notice her stir of interest.

"And, Letty," he finished, drifting around again to the subject of Davy, "if ye get a spare minute, it would pay ye to drop in and take one guid look at Davy's leather face. It's fearful. Well, lass, your office boy has popped his carroty head in here three times already now with a look at me. I must be on my way. Marcia, your mother could not have a more brisk and businesslike assistant. Ye have a way of workin', lass, that pleases me."

But even at the door he turned back, resting his hand again upon Mother Letty's shoulder.

"Ye're quite sure ye dinna feel ill, eh, Letty?" he queried anxiously, looking down at the tired winsome face beneath the whitening

hair. "I would not have ye down and out, dear lass, for anything in the world I could do to stop it."

"Quite sure!" said Mrs. Weston but she brushed her hair back with a weariful little gesture that the Doctor long remembered.

Letty's customers were of absorbing interest to the Doctor. Men, bristling with that superstition with which the street is rife, came to her with the whim that the Goddess of Chance was a woman and therefore this quiet little woman in severely tailored black would bring them luck; women, unreasoning and reckless; and, bulwarking the transient trade, an older, more conservative line of men who had known and revered David Manning, her father, and remembered his daughter.

"A wonderful, wonderful little woman!" reflected the Doctor with pride as he threaded his way through the outer office, "efficient, energetic, tireless in her business life, but I canna for the life of me reconcile her as I have seen her to-day with the self-effacin', back-pattin', colorless slave of Rodney's caprices that she is in her home. Like Davy, she has a dual personality. Now for my lecture, deil take it! I dinna think I would mind so much if I did not have to converse in such fussy, careful English."

He frowned at a twinge of conscience.

“Indiscreet, doubtless, Roderick Glenmuir, but I think I understood ye to say that ye dinna care. Hum. . . . I dinna blame ye. . . . Ye knew well enough before ye spoke that ’twas indiscreet. Aweel, I dinna doubt that to such a canny business body as Letty such a bit of information may have verra valuable possibilities, though myself I canna see verra great significance save incipient apoplexy in the man’s fit and his bletherin’. Doubtless a body versed in the ways of bulls and bears and bellwethers and the other members of the menagerie, values many a thing of seemin’ unimportance to the layman.” And the Doctor dismissed the trivial incident from his mind—not to recall it in full again until another eventful winter had winged its stormy way over Auburnia and his roses were nodding again.

But his careless suspicion had hit the mark. To one versed in the sign-lore of the street and the history of Alabama Coal and Iron, Willis Harvey’s fit of fury was not without significance. . . . And no one outside knew—none save an indiscreet Scot who was lecturing brilliantly at St. Jerome’s, and a tired little business woman scanning rows of figures.

“It must be that,” she was saying over and

over again to herself. "It must be that! And yet — and yet —"

With a glance at Marcia, typewriting by the window, Mrs. Weston unlocked a drawer beside her and reread the curt notification that had spelled for her two sleepless nights of secret agony and dismay.

It was from the heirs of one Robert Colfax, Rodney's benefactor in those dark days when financial disaster had followed in the wake of his visionary scheming — when Rodney, delicately reminding Mr. Colfax of intimate college favors to the wild and only son who had died in his youth, had claimed from the bitter old man a heavy reimbursement.

And now, with the old financier scarcely in his grave, his heirs were refusing the customary renewal of the note which year by year had borne the Westons onward to repayment.

"Marcia, will you make me a statement, dear, of just where we stand on the Colfax loan?"

"Right here, mother," said Marcia. "You asked me to make it for you yesterday. Remember?"

"Yes, yes, to be sure! I had forgotten." Mrs. Weston touched her forehead again with a gesture of distress and stared at the figures before her.

Thirty thousand dollars! How little it had seemed then in the disastrous melee and how gigantic it had been destined to loom as the years went by, sinking with unbelievable slowness for all the heavy toll paid year by year!

"Twenty-one thousand more with interest to pay," said Marcia briskly. "And with the thirty-four hundred we've saved this year that takes it down to seventeen thousand, six hundred. Wasn't it bully, mother, that we were able to save so much? It's been the banner year, with the twins helping and Rose surprising us all with her splendid contribution. How in the world did she manage to save so much!"

Twenty-one thousand dollars! How lightly the girl had spoken, secure in the hope of renewal. . . . But Marcia did not know. . . . Who was there like Robert Colfax to take such a note without collateral? . . . And there were only ten days more! . . . Mrs. Weston tensed her hands and sat motionless, carefully, keenly thinking it all out as perforce she must. . . . A wave of sickness swept her into courage.

\* \* \* \* \*

To Scanlon, junior member of the firm of Griggs and Scanlon, came that rainy afternoon an unknown buyer.

"Seventeen hundred shares of Alabama Coal and Iron!" repeated Scanlon, concealing surprise. But he glanced at the buyer.

Unlike many of her sex and errand, however, his chance customer seemed definitely to know her own mind and with a shrug — who meddles with "hunches"? — Scanlon turned back to his desk and counted over the marginal thirty-four hundred dollars in bills which his customer proffered against a two-point drop in her stock, chatting pleasantly as he made out a broker's receipt. Considerably interested, he watched her depart, for oddly enough, save a name and an order, this quiet buyer of Alabama Coal and Iron had not uttered a word.

Now there were times when Scanlon duplicated a customer's order if he had confidence in the buyer's judgment, but to-day he merely reflected that women did singular things.

Straight to the Exchange the telephone carried the order for seventeen hundred shares of Alabama Coal and Iron. The floor member of Scanlon's firm saw his number glow upon the great boards at the side, took his message, unaware that Fate marched at his heels, and turned back toward the numbered post where Alabama Coal and Iron was listed.

"Seventeen hundred shares of Alabama Coal

and Iron!" he called in his monotonous voice. Almost on the heels of his words a brisk little broker answered:

"Sold!"

## Chapter 29

*A tale of ticker and tape and tears and trouble*

THE dull monotony of rain and gloom lingered still another day. At half-past two Marcia glanced at the street where the rain was beating down in gusts, and slipped into her rain-coat. At the door she turned back anxiously.

"Headache any worse, Mother?"

"No, no, dear," said Mrs. Weston with an effort.

"Sure?"

"It's a little better if anything just now. Better hurry, Marcia. I'd like to have those checks deposited to-night."

Marcia's face cleared.

"I'll most likely be a little late, Mother; maybe four o'clock or so. Dad asked me to do a little shopping for him and I'm going up town. Mind?"

Mrs. Weston said truthfully that she did not and as the outer door closed, she rang for the office boy.

"Teddy," she said, "it's dull and rainy. I'll

not need you any longer this afternoon. Tell Miles he may go, too, please. I'd like to have the office quite to myself."

So Teddy and Miles departed to bowl and quarrel over the score. Left alone, with the office quiet save for the occasional sound of voices in the corridor or the jingle of the elevator bell, Mrs. Weston drooped her head forward upon her arms with a shuddering sigh of relief. For somehow it had seemed that she could no longer bear the sound of voices or the eyes of Marcia and Teddy and Miles with the knowledge that Alabama Coal and Iron had dropped a point since noon.

Click! Click! Click! went the ticker in the corner. Swish! Swish! Swish! the swirling rain against the office windows. How dark the street outside was growing and how sharp and terrible this new pain that throbbed through her head.

Click! Click! . . . Click! Click! The Doctor was right. It was a sound to get upon your nerves at last.

Click! Click! Click! Harvey's illness then had been meaningless and the doctor's careless tip a cul-de-sac. . . . And the Colfax loan?

Shaking pitifully, Mrs. Weston covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, God!" she moaned, "I can not look again!"

Sobbing in agony and fear she fell upon her knees, praying in an incoherent murmur.

"Oh, God," she whispered, "it is so little — so little to ask here where men fight and play with millions — and if I lose there is no way out — no way —"

The chill was gone now. . . . Her face seemed very hot and dry . . . her throat parched. . . . Click! Click! Click! . . . Why was the office, the desk-light, the rain-dotted windows so blurred? . . . And where — where was Marcia?

Click! Click! . . . Click! Click . . . It was beating its way into her brain. . . . Stumbling across the room, Mrs. Weston glanced in terror at the blur of tape, staggered and fell forward upon the floor with a sob.

The clock above the mantel struck three, half-past and four but still the huddled figure by the ticker did not stir. Lights flashed up through the dark and rain and at quarter after four, cheeks wet and rosy with the cold, came Marcia, mystified at the unaccustomed darkness in the outer office.

But the inner office too was very quiet and Marcia's puzzled eyes wandered slowly from

the deserted desk with its droplight burning brightly, to a shadow by the ticker. Then with a spring she was on her knees beside a tangled mass of tape, chafing her mother's cold white hands in terror.

With a shudder of fear she counted the pulse—it seemed but a feeble flutter of uncertain life—brushed the soft, white hair back from the pretty pallid face and began to cry, passionately reproaching herself again and again for ignoring those ominous signs of failing health crowding so vividly before her now.

“Oh, Mother, Mother!” cried the girl with a sob of remorse, “why did we not guess! Why *did* we not guess!”

But Marcia was eminently cool-headed and sensible in times of stress and courageously wiping her eyes and biting her lips, she was soon at the phone, calling in swift succession a doctor, a limousine to wait at the curb, Sonia's office on Fourth Avenue and the Hame o' Roses.

“If you will be at the house, Doctor Roderrick,” she said tremulously, dangerously close to breaking down as the Doctor's kindly voice came over the wire, keen with sympathy, “and—and if you will tell Rose without frightening her, so that Mother's bed may be ready in case the doctor says I may bring her home. . . .

Yes, I will have a limousine waiting. . . .  
If I can not bring her home I will phone you again. And, Oh, Doctor Roderick, be careful how you tell poor Dad. He's nervous and upset over the election — ”

And Marcia, practical until the bulk of her test was over, dropped the receiver and stared out through a mist of tears at the brilliant city of rain-glisten and lights outlined beyond the window.

“ Oh, Mother,” she whispered, “ life is very hard.”

## Chapter 30

*Of a limousine and an alpenstock, with incidental mention of a crucible of suffering*

O H, Agnes, lass," said the weary Doctor, homing at dawn from the Westons, "'twas verra hard to tell my poor Leddy Rose about her mother. I will not forget it this many a day. She did not cry out, mind ye, or anything, just listened so quiet and queer that I was fair upset. And then, holdin' the veins of her throat with her hand, she turned upon me, her pretty face so white and her sweet brown eyes so brave and yet so mortal tragic that I just could not meet them without a chokin' in my throat.

"'It is what I have been fearing for days,' she said quietly. 'I begged her to rest and not to worry.' And then, Agnes, she was off, summonin' Lisbeth and workin' away about her mother's room so silent and tireless, with her throat throbbin' so I could not help seein'. And meetin' my eyes now and again with a brave little smile that I just could not stand — it was so mortal pathetic.

"And by and by, after a wait so long I

myself had begun to fidget, comes the sound of the limousine chuggin' outside and straightway so swift and quiet ye would not believe, Mother Rose is out upon the porch in the rain, almost before I myself knew that Marcia was there at last with her mother, callin' out to me to come to her.

"'Twas a brave thing the lass did," said the Doctor shaking his head, "bringin' her mother home through the dark and rain so fearless. But had she not brought her home to-night, it would have been many and many a week before she could have come and maybe not at all. The doctor in New York told the lass as much himself, advisin' home with all possible speed. It was a long, dark, lonely ride over rainy country roads, for she could not get Sonia on the wire to come with her, and all the way, ever since the doctor had fetched Letty back to speakin' a little in the office, she had been out of her head, starin' and babblin' incoherent, and by the time the car rolled up to the house, she was unconscious again. I had to take her out of the car in my arms and carry her to the house. So thin and slight she was, Agnes, that it seemed but the liftin' of a bairn, poor, brave little woman!

"And Marcia — ye would not believe a young

lass could be so brave and so cool and sane. White-faced and scared as she was, she fell to orderin' us all about, havin' planned it all on the way home, and maybe ye would not believe it, Agnes, but all the way out she had held her mother in her arms, stormin' and beggin' the poor chauffeur to go faster — faster if he would earn double his fee.

“God help me, Agnes, I canna see where it will end. In all my years as a physician I have never seen such a complete and terrible breakdown. I did not tell Mother Rose — God knows the dear lass has enough now! — but there may be pneumonia along with the brain fever and maybe typhoid. May the guid God help the brave little woman weather the gale. It would seem beyond the power of mortal.”

“And Rodney?” Mrs. Glenmuir's face asked many things.

The Doctor's face flamed into terrible anger.

“Agnes,” he said, “I canna verra well speak of him. Just as we had calmed the house down, he came in, doubtless from some fancy electioneerin' and I myself came down to break the news to him as I had promised Marcia. And, Agnes, he struck his chest with a wild thump and threw back his head like a stage man, mutterin' something, if ye would believe it, about ‘a crucible

of sufferin' through which every genius must pass to perfect his art.' I dinna suppose that in the first shock of it the man fully realized the terrible gravity of it all but, Agnes, it made me so fearful mad to think he would enjoy his own actin' at such a time and drag in his art, that I lost my head entirely and straightway I closed the studio door and fell to thunderin' at him fearful, tellin' him flat that 'twas the crucible of sufferin' through which the *wife* of so-called genius must pass and that *he* richly deserved anything of sufferin' that came to him on the side. And I might have said a guid deal more, for I was thinkin' verra swift and certain, had not the Leddy Rose come down to tell me that she and she alone would nurse her mother. And though I stormed a bit, thinkin' it of course but so much more work for the poor lass, I could not help rememberin' the wonderful way she nursed her father through pneumonia, just as efficient as any nurse with training. Lookin' at her wistful eyes, I could not say her nay. Oh, my poor Leddy Rose!" And the Doctor choked.

"Agnes," he finished, rubbing his chin in defiance, "ye doubtless will tell me that I am fearful meddlesome and have taken too much upon myself; and doubtless I have; but homin'

just now with the memory of that house of trouble so fresh in my mind, I sent a night telegram to Aunt Ann Weston beggin' her in the name of our grand guid friendship to come at once — that her brother's house needs some such practical, brisk person to make my poor lass's burden a little lighter. And if Ann isn't off in some heathenish country climbin' another mountain with her alpenstock and a string of guides, I know well enough she will come straightway; for Rose is the verra apple of her eye and she is mortal fond of Letty and the other lasses too, for all she does not come to Auburnia frequent."

"That," said Mrs. Glenmuir gently, "was very meddlesome indeed but I doubt if you could have done a wiser thing."

The tired Doctor beamed.

"Oh, Agnes, lass," he exclaimed, intensely gratified, "when I do accomplish anything wise and sensible, I'm a verra proud man!"

So it was that the Doctor's telegram, coming to its goal at Lenox, Massachusetts, with the sunrise, brought aid to Mother Rose in the form of Aunt Ann Weston, a handsome, self-reliant spinster of cosmopolitan tastes who climbed the mountains of the globe for pastime, returning betimes to the comfortable old farmhouse

she maintained for infrequent seizures of domesticity.

The most startling things about Aunt Ann were her battered alpenstock and her eyeglasses, for the one went forth in her hand wherever she went and the other, by reason of a fatal facility for mislaying them in time of need, she purchased at five and ten cent stores by the gross, scattered them about in unexpected places and thus was most conveniently enabled to put forth an excursive hand at any time and find a pair of glasses.

Said Aunt Ann to her ponderous housekeeper as she picked up the Doctor's telegram at breakfast, extended a large, strong, graceful hand to the fern dish and unearthed a pair of glasses:

"Mrs. Yagel, you will kindly adjust your ear trumpet and give me your entire attention. Thank you. . . . I wish to say that it's very fortunate indeed that I'm at home. . . . I've been thinking some of Chimborazo. I leave in an hour for my brother's home in Auburnia. Au-bur-nia," she repeated and followed Mrs. Yagel's significant glance at the alpenstock in the corner. "No, Mrs. Yagel, it is not another mountain. Though it may and doubtless will prove worse, it is not another

mountain. And now if you will kindly ask Joe to curtail his usual hour of operatic whistling and bird imitations and saddle Peter Botte, I will take my usual farewell survey of the farm. While I am gone I would be greatly obliged if Joe would have the carriage ready to take me to the station, bring down my luggage—it is in readiness as usual—and place it beside my alpenstock in the hall. I may be back in a week or a month and I may not be back in a year but that of course is in no way different from any other absence of mine. Any time I come home, however, I expect to find the house in order, Aunt Judith's blue china on the table here and the silver teapot shining brightly as usual."

And thus it was that an hour later, with her alpenstock in her hand and a gross of glasses among her luggage, Aunt Ann set briskly out for Auburnia—eventually to gather Rose up in her arms, wipe away the first tears that the tireless nurse had shed, and thereafter to assume complete control of her brother's disorganized home.

## Chapter 31

*How Aunt Ann settled the Colfax loan and  
how the fuming Doctor disburdened  
his mind*

BY DAY and by night now Peggy drowsed by the Weston gate, serenely unaware of the heartbreaking fear and sorrow beyond the checkerpaned windows. For the Gunnigan editorial with its bitter aftermath of notoriety, the Colfax loan and the unceasing strain of overwork and worry, had done their grim, unholy work with terrible completeness. Though Rose and the Doctor tirelessly fought the Shadow, day by day it seemed to glide with sable pinions closer to the bed where Mother Letty tossed in wild delirium.

Rodney alone, dazed and curiously aggrieved of manner, seemed not fully to comprehend the seriousness of the battle.

"Depend upon it, Ann," he said, "things are nothing like so bad as Roderick would have us believe. He's a confirmed pessimist. Myself, I avoid him. He's offensively personal at times and sticks his chin out at me so aggressively of late whenever I happen across him that I never

feel quite sure what he's going to say. For a physician, Roderick, I must say, has a singularly indelicate disregard of nerves and the other temperamental niceties of refinement."

"Bosh!" said Aunt Ann and shrugged her broad full shoulders. Such a fatal optimism, she reflected, had been a potent factor in the calamitous disappearance of her brother's patrimony.

There came a night when Marcia, arriving home from her mother's office with a sheaf of papers in her hand, looked so pale and worried that Aunt Ann, who met every one in the hall at night with a smile and cheerful hand-pat, raised the girl's chin with gentle hand and stared long and questioningly into her troubled eyes.

"Mother?" asked Marcia and looked away.

"About the same, dear. What else, Marcia? Something else has gone wrong, hasn't it?"

"Oh, Aunt Ann!" cried Marcia desperately, "it's the Colfax loan. I found the letter to-day."

Now Aunt Ann knew absolutely nothing about the Colfax loan but her customary policy was to find out all she could by herself and ask questions afterward, wherefore she promptly plunged her hand into the umbrella stand beside

her, brought forth a pair of glasses and examined the sheaf of papers with a frown. Perusal was sufficient.

"These," she said, moving briskly toward the door, "I shall lay before your father. The original loan, I see, was made to him."

"Oh, no, no, no!" begged Marcia wildly. "We never bother him with things like that."

Aunt Ann raised her finely arched eyebrows.

"It's time you did," said she.

"Oh, Aunt Ann, please don't!" Marcia's voice rang with tragedy but Aunt Ann was already on her way to the studio, rustling calmly on to heresy.

"Rodney," said Aunt Ann, "I find here a statement of the Colfax loan, thirty thousand dollars at six per cent, of which fourteen thousand and interest has been paid back by Letty at the rate of two thousand a year, leaving a balance of sixteen thousand which with interest to date, aggregates twenty-one thousand, due day after to-morrow. The Colfax heirs refuse a renewal of the yearly note."

Rodney stared helplessly at his sister.

"Oh, Ann," said he petulantly, "why *do* you always reduce your conversation to such — er — concentrated facts and the fewest possible words? It's so difficult to follow you."

"Bosh!" said Aunt Ann. "What about the loan?"

"If you will kindly repeat your list of figures again slowly," said Rodney with dignity, "I will doubtless come to some definite comprehension of your meaning. As it is I might just as well remind you, Ann, and perhaps save you the trouble of going over your arithmetical announcement, that I have very little head for figures and sordid things of that sort. They excite me. They always have and just now with Letty so ill and the election approaching —"

"I mean," said Aunt Ann bluntly, "that you're pledged to pay twenty-one thousand dollars to the Colfax heirs day after to-morrow. What are you going to do about it?"

Rodney rose.

"You can't possibly mean," he said, "that the Colfax heirs are vulgarly pressing us about that ridiculous loan in such a time as this — such a time as this, I say, when even the telephone operator gives the bell but the merest tinkle. It seems incredible. What with Letty ill and my time so crowded that I've scarcely time to think, and after all the money I advanced to Bob Colfax in college days to keep him out of the most infamous scrapes! No, no,

Ann, I can't believe it, I *can't* believe it! It's too vulgarly commercial to be true."

"Where will you get the money?"

"I shan't get it," said Rodney flatly. "I'm so nervous now that I can't sleep and if I go to filling my head with loans and lawyers and papers and figures and things and overtax myself, I'll like as not be down in bed too. And certainly the demands of my home are sufficiently exigent at present to need me in health. Let the Colfax heirs," he finished elaborately, "wait. Let them, I say, wait! Something," with a Micawberish flash of optimism, "will undoubtedly happen."

"Something," said Aunt Ann, "undoubtedly would if I did not think enough of Letty and the girls to ward it off. Doubtless I am making a great mistake; I ought to let you get out with the vulgar herd and hustle for the money or get sordidly and commercially sued. But there's trouble enough in the house now. For Letty's sake, and by way of some reparation for what she's suffered through *our* family, for she comes of a remarkably sane and decent one herself, I'll pay the twenty-one thousand. You needn't thank me. I'm not in a receptive mood. Thank Heaven instead that I didn't squander my money as you did yours."

And so Aunt Ann sallied forth with alpenstock in hand and interviewed the Colfax heirs.

Now it soon became apparent to Aunt Ann and the Doctor that Rodney felt himself somewhat sanctified by the distinction of a sorrow. To the outraged Doctor, who watched him patrol the driveway one afternoon with his head bowed wearily upon his chest in picturesque melancholy, his hands clasped loosely behind him, it was the final straw. At sunset after a whispered consultation with Aunt Ann he betook himself once more to Rodney's studio.

"I might just as well tell ye," he began curtly, "that I do not care for the conceited way ye're bolsterin' your vanity with stage pictures of yourself in the role of a sufferin' husband. Ye have done enough harm now merely by existin', without addin' a touch of comedy to the terrible tragedy of poor Letty's illness."

"I—I don't know—what you mean," stammered Rodney, coloring with annoyance.

"Well," snapped the Doctor, "ye will know straightway. For now I have begun I will not stop until I have had my say. For years I have held back, watchin' ye steer your family to perdition. Now, if I do not rid myself of my opinions, I will doubtless burst with fury!

Canna ye get outside of yourself long enough to see that it is yourself alone has brought poor Letty down to the door of death itself? Have ye not ruined lives enough without feedin' your self-importance so complacently upon the fruits of your selfish doings?

“Great God, man,” thundered the Doctor, breaking loose again with unexpected velocity, “where are your eyes, your heart, your brain, your feelings, that ye canna correct your egotistical angle of vision. ‘Conceited gowk, puffed up wi’ windy pride!’ Ye have well nigh ruined the life of poor Leddy Rose by chainin’ her to the plough and turnin’ Letty out to support ye in idleness after bearin’ more bairns than her frail body could stand, while ye dabble with your daffy art and nurse your daffier nerves, bletherin’ along about temperament and such things! Ye need not make such stately passes at me, because I will not stop. Ye have sent my poor Larry into exile with a scaldin’ heart torn for love of Mother Rose, who canna leave her father’s house. Ye have ruined the lives of all your daughters, for they could not desert Mother Rose with such a freakish condition of things at home—God bless the loyal lasses! And ye have plunged the braw lads of the Music Box and the Cave into mortal

misery and gloom by chainin' your womenfolk to your side.

"And ye canna paint! Look at the chromos about the studio with honest eyes and ye will know the truth yourself. Myself I would not trust ye with the side of a decent house. As for your nerves with which ye excuse your fiendish failin's, ye're a guid sight healthier and nothing like so nervous as poor Letty has been. Where are your ears," raved the Doctor, "that ye have not heard the roar of laughter at your fancy politicianin' with your Norfolk suit and your big talk, written, I daresay, by Mother Rose's busy fingers? Could ye not see that the Gunnigan editorial, for all its brutality, was true and that men stared askance at ye when ye passed by until Reddy so handsomely retracted? Could ye not see that Letty was worryin' over that and the loan and many another ugly thing that has come to her through your shirkin' of a man's first duty? 'But far off fowls ha'e feathers fine!' and so all these ugly, naked truths with which I am vulgarly batterin' at your sensitive artistic soul, ye doubtless keep afar off from ye, so that their feathers may seem fine and sightly. And then with it all ye stalk up and down the driveway like Hamlet, glintin' melancholy at Letty's windows for the neighbors to

see. And now I must tell ye before I go that if Letty lives she canna go back to brokerin' or her life will pay the penalty. And so ye had better burn your chromos and forget your nerves and try to imitate a man!"

The Doctor seized his hat and stalked away. At the door he wheeled.

"Will ye go to work, man Rodney?" he thundered unexpectedly.

Rodney drew himself magnificently to his full height.

"Roderick," he said coldly, "when you have apologized to me for all these infamous insults —"

"When I apologize to you, man Rodney," shot forth the Doctor viciously, "I will be carryin' allopathic pills in my medicine case and doctorin' the measles with absent treatment."

And he was gone.

## Chapter 32

*In which Aunt Ann feels called upon to rant  
and the Doctor in a dark and terrible  
hour prays for guidance*

RODNEY," Aunt Ann opened the drawer of the studio table, drew forth a pair of glasses and regarded her brother intently, "I understand you spoke to Marcia last night about changing doctors."

"It is true," acknowledged Rodney wearily, "that in my anger, I did broach the subject but upon maturer reflection I have decided to ignore Roderick's unwarranted outburst and retain his services. It is infinitely more dignified. He is subject to those ranting fits and scarcely accountable when they seize him. Moreover, he has always disliked me. Why, Ann, last summer he bolted in here one morning—it was the morning after that terrible storm—closed the studio door and without one single iota of explanation called me the most abusive names in involved Scotch, one right after the other as if they were being propelled from the mouth of a cannon. I could

not even hope to reproduce the terrible malignancy of his voice. And then he bolted away just as he had come, leaving me upset and utterly mystified. He lacks presence and dignity and mental balance. As I've always said to Letty, with his baggy knees, his piebald mare, his wheezy old bagpipe, his collies and his roses and his vernacular, to say nothing of his slang, he'd be more at home jogging around among the Scottish farm-folk, gossiping shamelessly with the old wives and bouncing the 'bairns' on his ill-fated creases. Nobody's safe from his biting tongue. Simply because old Mrs. Briscott, his wealthiest patient, mind you, simply I say, Ann, because she called him back several times after he was well on his way down the stairs, he stuck his head in at the bedroom door the last time and insulted her!"

"Insulted her!"

"I have the quotation right here in a book of Burns. I looked it up after Mrs. Briscott told me." And he read impressively:

*"Scenes of woe and scenes of pleasure,  
Scenes that former thoughts renew,  
Scenes of woe and scenes of pleasure  
Now a sad and last adieu!"*

"Excellent!" chuckled Ann.

"And then," resumed Rodney with dignity, "the very night Letty was brought home ill —"

"I'm glad you feel so broad-minded about retaining him professionally," interrupted Aunt Ann dryly, "for your wise and prudent daughters agree that he must be retained at any cost. They have the utmost confidence in him and justly. And your daughters are likely to pay the bill."

"Ann," said Rodney, "you will oblige me greatly by not making such acrid references to my art prospects. I've suffered enough."

"Bosh!" said Aunt Ann. And adjusting her glasses, she glanced squarely at her brother, who promptly began to flutter about in a panic.

"Oh, Ann!" he stammered. "Are you going to rant too?"

"Rodney," said Aunt Ann with considerable warmth, "things have come to such a pass that I feel called upon to rant. It seems to me, viewing the situation here without prejudice, that in a sense you are the unresisting victim of — let us call it over-feminization. Mother first of all began it because you were the only male in the house and she was a widow who saw in her only boy the features of an idolized husband. I was taught to kowtow to your superior judgment and was in eternal disgrace

because I didn't. You always got the prize lamb chop I remember and the tenderest portion of the chicken or any other little delicacy we had, and mother fluttered about you as if you were a sultan instead of a very ordinary but good-looking boy who was rapidly being spoiled by the adulation of a lot of silly, lovesick girls flocking after you perpetually because your eyes were rather fetching and your shoulders broad.

"And then, before you could meet good, solid men who would thrash it out of you, you had married dear, winsome, clever little Letty Manning, greatly against her father's wishes, too, you remember! And you promptly ascended another domestic throne to be petted and coddled and worshipped all over again. Mind I'm not blaming Letty. She's a peerless little woman. But she had the wrong material to work with. It was a great pity, Rodney, that you never had to work. Your life's been too sheltered for mental health.

"Now, motherhood," said Aunt Ann, ignoring the picturesque martyrdom of Rodney's air, "motherhood, I say, is a grand, sacred function but its one fault is the fact that it over-develops a woman's inherent tenderness and makes her viewpoint one of sentiment alone.

So Letty, wonderful wife and wonderful mother, loved you and condoned your faults, bore your handsome babies and developed such a God-given maternity that she mothered you along with the rest. Then when the financial crash came you were too vitiated by a life of indolence and ease and love to see your chance. And once more by a most unfortunate twist of Fate for one of your temperament, you were the only man in a flock of worshipful altruistic gentlewomen who, smart as they were, were somehow miraculously blinded by your sex and your magnetism and your undeniable good looks to the fact that after all these things which held them were purely superficial. You remind me of a great, imposing mountain peak of ice and snow which from a distance appears to be very promising and complicated but which ultimately proves to be largely a shallow, spectacular sort of thing of flash and glitter easy to climb."

"Ann! What a singular comparison!"

"Fate," proceeded Aunt Ann, meeting her brother's eyes which shifted and fell, "Fate gave you a wonderfully smart and efficient little woman and winsome, clever daughters; but you've rankly abused the gift and your hold upon them is beginning to slip away. I

can see that myself. Now I can't pretend to understand how you came to drift along to such selfish destruction of everything about you, or how you came to squander Letty's patrimony along with your own. You've accepted incredible sacrifices from your wife and daughters. Even the house you live in is the old Manning estate and the money you spend Letty's, but I have this much to say for your own good and my self-respect. Somewhere beneath all your layers of affectation and indolence and conceit and your cherished delusions about yourself, there must be some remote kernel of decency. It may be drawing its last breath, but it's there, I'm sure, for you come of good stuff. It's not reasonable or fair to suppose that such a splendid, broad-minded man as Dad and such an intelligent woman as Mother, for all her mistaken notions of rearing you, could beget such an offspring as you appear to be. Like an avalanche, I imagine, you began well and then collected things all the way down the mountain into the valley of selfish sloth.

"And the very first step to take in order to disinter this hidden, gasping kernel of decency," finished Aunt Ann, "is, I think, to admit that you can't paint. Then get a job! What's more, I don't want you to burst into a shower

of aggrieved inanities but to think over what I've said. Hunt for the kernel," finished Aunt Ann at the door, "and look for a job!"

Rodney fell back weakly in his chair.

"A 'job'!" he murmured. "I can not imagine where Ann picks up such vulgar words . . . but Roderick, of course!"

For effects of this siege, Aunt Ann and the Doctor waited in vain. Rodney merely withdrew into a shell of dignity and reserve and cut them both.

"It will take more than words to wake him up, Ann!" bitterly confided the Doctor. "And I think I know well enough what would do the trick. But somehow, God help me! for all I canna abide the man, I dinna wish to put it to the test, it would be so mortal cruel. And yet if poor Letty lives, if the poor lass is to finish her stormy life in peace, the man must be jolted outside of himself no matter how cruel the means. Oh, Ann, I canna see how such a splendid woman as yourself came to have such a brother. It outrages all my notions of heredity. Now I must go or I winna quit bletherin' about him this hour or so. One thing I would impress upon ye. Mother Rose must sleep to-night or I winna answer for the consequences. The lass is near the end of her

endurance and I've told her so myself. I would have ye see that she goes off to some verra quiet room for some rest — early. I have left her a powder in case, as she says, she canna sleep. Dear Leddy Ann, 'tis mortal guid of ye to relieve her and manage your brother's house so capable and mother the poor, heart-sick lasses as if ye had bairns of your own. I'm mortal proud of ye."

He turned back at the door.

"Mind ye, Ann, if there is the faintest change in Letty, the verra faintest, ye must send for me at once without a minute's delay. After eight I will be lecturin' about Bobby Burns to the Caledonians at the Club House, a yearly fancy of theirs from which I canna wean them. But for that I would not go home at all, for I'm fearin' to-night most of any."

\* \* \* \* \*

The change came, a difference in respiration barely perceptible to Aunt Ann sitting watchfully by the bedside. To the Doctor, scarcely in the prologue of the only lecture from which he did not have to delete his cherished burr and his dialect, the news came by phone and thence by a folded slip of paper to the platform.

"Guid folk," he said simply, "I know well

ye will forgive me for slippin' away so soon. There is no guid Scotchman, I feel verra sure, who would have me sparklin' about Bobby Burns when a life lies in my hands." And he was off through the door and climbing into his car before the stir had died away.

With a nod to Aunt Ann as he entered the sick room the Doctor bent over the motionless figure upon the bed, his face so stern that for all her fine control Aunt Ann trembled violently. Swiftly, quietly, with never a word, the Doctor tested pulse and temperature, the frowning expression upon his face changing to one Aunt Ann could not fathom, then bending closer, he listened intently to the muffled sounds of the chest.

"Ann," he said abruptly, avoiding her frightened eyes, "ye are about to trust me now as ye have never trusted mortal man before. I would have ye send Rodney to me at once, mind ye, with all possible speed. And then if ye will be so guid, wait patiently below until I come to ye."

Still avoiding Ann's imploring gaze as she hurried away, the Doctor walked over to the window and stood looking out upon the leafless trees touched with the cold white moonlight of the night. Barely an instant his

look was one of indecision, then with mouth and chin set in lines of purpose, he looked up at the glittering stars, unconsciously holding forth his arm with a gesture of reverence.

"Oh, God of my fathers!" prayed the Doctor, "this night I would have ye guide a sinful Scot with your infinite wisdom."

The door creaked. Rodney entered, white and frightened.

"Oh, Roderick," he whispered, "what is it? Why are you so grim and terrible? Is it —" but the Doctor pointed sternly toward the bed with a gesture of rebuke.

"Down on your knees," he said in awful tones. "If God has given ye a mortal's heart, ye need it now! Your brave little wife is dying."

## Chapter 33

### *How Rodney found the kernel*

FOR an electric instant the two men faced each other; then, his own face whiter than the face of the man before him, the Doctor turned away and Rodney tottered in horror to his knees by Letty's bed, frantically calling her name again and again. And the Doctor, shaken by the sight of a grief which he knew must be all the more bitter for the retributive sting of it, went quietly away and closed the door.

Left alone by the bedside Rodney buried his head in his hands with a sharp intake of his breath and prayed in an agony of terror and remorse for the life of the quiet sleeper on the bed.

For, after all, the words of Aunt Ann and the Doctor had pierced to the quick, and now in the hush of the death-chamber Rodney found himself staring at the ghosts of the past as grimly they unveiled the mockery of this thing he had called his love. Shaking, he sought to drive them all away but they

came again: pictures of Letty Manning, the fair-haired, winsome, brown-eyed girl who had turned his boyish head by the very charm of her. Gentle, worshipful wife and mother! Brave and loyal little fighter when the test had come and now — with a shuddering glance at the bed — now this wasted, febrile wraith from which they had guarded his frightened eyes. And the Doctor and Ann had said that he and he alone had done it.

“Oh, God,” he prayed pitifully, “it — it is not that I have not loved her. It is not that —”

The voice of conscience came again to mock him with this thing he called his love.

“I did not know — I did not guess,” he whispered, unconsciously answering the voice. “I — I thought it was but Roderick’s way to frighten me or I — I would not have walked so in the driveway. Oh, God, I can not let her go! . . . Save her, that I may make atonement!”

And the voice came still, again humbling the man to the very dust.

There were no poses now. . . . Stripped to the quivering, bleeding, warped thing he called his soul, the man faced his guilt, until at last came the boon of unconsciousness and Rodney fell forward upon the floor.

How long he lay there he never knew, but after a time he was conscious of a droning murmur outside the house and then a rap upon the door. It was Ann.

"Rodney," she said, "it is a great crowd of men with torches. You were to have addressed them, I suppose, about election, and they're growing tired of waiting."

"Yes — yes, I remember now." Dazed and shaking, Rodney followed her down the stairs. On the veranda, he faced a sportive mob of voters.

But a hush fell over the crowd as the glare of the torches fell upon Rodney's face — it was so strained and white and changed. "I — I can not talk to you to-night," he said.

"But the election, man, the election!" called an impatient voice. "Great Heavens, you can't afford to miss a chance."

Rodney flung out his arms and passionately wheeled upon the sobered crowd.

"The election be *damned!*" he cried choking. "Boys, my wife is dying."

With a murmur of sympathy the men uncovered and filed away.

And as the Weston door closed, an inconspicuous Scot climbed into his car and drove away.

“God forgive me,” he reflected gravely, “for a villainous liar but I do not think from what I have seen that it has been in vain. What with poor Letty’s pulse stronger and the fever down, ’tis a greater change for the guid than I dared to hope. And Ann will guard my sinful secret and quiet Rodney and see that poor Letty is comfortable for the night — God bless her fine, big, noble heart so mortal full of understandin’! — and we will quietly finish our play actin’ in the mornin’ and give the poor man’s scalded heart relief. He need never know the truth. Aweel —

*“Some books are lies from end to end —  
And some great lies were never penned!”*

## Chapter 34

*In which the Doctor takes a hand in the election  
for reasons of his own and Mother Letty  
finds she can not remember*

I'LL never forget his face, Agnes," confided the Doctor slowly. "It was the tortured face of a man who has been in purgatory! Somehow, after seein' him without his mask of folly, I canna help thinkin', for all my cynical scoffin', that Ann is right. Somewhere deep down within him, inherited from his father and mother, is a spark of decency which flamed up fresh to-night. Agnes, lass, it has come to me with great and earnest thinkin' that with something to keep the man busy — something outside to turn his thoughts from grooves about himself and lead him out betimes into the great world where guid men learn to live for one another, he may weather the gale at last and touch the shores of Christian living. And for the savin' of his soul, inconsistent as it may seem after all my bletherin', I have decided to support man Rodney for the post of mayor. Doubtless I am makin' a verra

great mistake — I make 'em frequent — and 'tis but a poor notion 'at the best; but it would seem with such a smart man as Marshall swingin' the council, Rodney can't go far wrong. And if he's elected, maybe in God's guid time he will be so busy mayorin' the city that he winna have time for paintin'; and that, Agnes, is after all the fearful rock upon which the family has come to shipwreck. Mayhap his political connection may lead him in time to some profitable, pleasant work if we are patient with him, as I fear I myself have never been yet, and try to lead him right, poor, daffy man!"

Slowly, fearfully climbing the hill to life again came Mother Letty, so weak and wan that she seemed but a pitiful ghost against the pillow. And as the fevered brain took up its task again, into her eyes crept fitfully a puzzled look at which the Doctor wondered greatly. For hours now she lay staring and frowning at the wall, touching her forehead again and again in distress. Once, meeting Rose's anxious glance, she caught the girl's hand and held it tightly.

"Oh, Rose, dear," she whispered, "if I could only remember!"

"Dear, *dear* Mother," said Rose in con-

cern, "please don't worry so much about it. After all, dear, the only thing in the world that matters is that you're going to get well. And presently, dear me, yes, you'll be remembering everything!"

But Mother Letty clung tragically to the girl's hand.

"Oh, Rose, dear," she faltered, "I did not mean to chain you so. I—I did not know what I was asking, dear, when you took my place, so sweet and brave and loyal. It was not fair—not fair! And then when I read what Mr. Gunnigan said, Oh, Rose, I could have died with shame and remorse! Poor Larry! Poor boy! And you, my brave, splendid daughter! Oh, Rose, Rose, you'll forgive your mother for it all?"

Rose gently kissed her mother's forehead.

"Dear Mother," she said, "there is nothing at all to forgive. And Larry writes such splendid, cheerful letters. No more talking now or the Doctor will scold. To-night Dad's coming in for a while and you must save your strength to chat a little with him." A tear glistened on Rose's lashes. "Oh, Mother, if you could only have seen Dad's face when the Doctor told him you would live. And Aunt Ann cried so long it frightened me."

But avoid these worrisome topics as she might, Rose could not keep her mother's truant thoughts from wandering back to the thing she could not remember and to Rose's life of sacrifice.

And in the midst of it all, with the Hame o' Roses awakening to mysterious political activity and the Doctor's frank support cementing what Rodney's impassioned damning of the election had begun, came election day and to the blare of trumpets and the noise of crowds, Rodney became the mayor of Auburnia and wildly elated, Michael Morough called a certain thunderstruck Irishman upon the phone and offered him the foremost political plum in the boss's basket.

Thus by ways devious and odd, Rodney came to the chair of chief executive of his city but the victory was bitter. For Rodney had come to know that for a time at least he had been the butt of the town's scorn and ridicule.

But with all its noise and rejoicing, to Rose it was a sad day, too, for the Doctor at nightfall disburdened his mind of a growing conviction.

"Leddy Rose," he said gently, "I canna disguise the truth from ye any longer. If ye would keep your dear, brave little mother with

ye, ye must take her south for the winter. Like a delicate flower she canna stand the cruel cold. I am verra much disappointed that she is convalescin' so mortal slow but I fear it comes most from her fussin' so about rememberin'. I would have her see new things, new people and occupy her mind in a different way. What with her porin' so persistent over the daffy thing she canna remember, and her mind so blank from noon of the rainy day she dropped down in the office, and now with her fussin' about yourself and Larry, there are times, though God knows I wish I did not have to tell ye, when I have grave fears for her reason. Now, now, dear lass, dinna ye cry after such a brave siege as ye've had. Just the winter months in the south, dear child, and then doubtless by the time my bonny roses have come again, please God we will all be happy once more."

So Rose as ever wiped her eyes and smiled and the Doctor patted her hair, cleared his throat and strode away.

On a sunny day in late November, Mother Letty was wheeled away to the train with Rose beside her, to find her stateroom banked high with flowers from the Doctor's lads and gifts from her loyal family, over which she cried

a little and laughed a little, clinging with a sob to Rodney's hand. Presently, clustering about Aunt Ann and her battered alpenstock, Rodney and his daughters, for all their sinking hearts, bravely waved as the train drew out. For it was bearing away their beloved comforters in time of trouble, Mother Rose and Mother Letty.

## Chapter 35

### *The forces that went to the making of Rodney*

AND so Aunt Ann systematically redistributed her glasses—for in the general excitement many of them had been too securely re-hidden to find—wrote a concentrated letter of instructions to her housekeeper, and set herself again to the management of her brother's lonely house.

Who may say what inner tormenting forces were ceaselessly at work beneath the baffling quiet of Rodney's manner? Aunt Ann wondered greatly but reflecting that humanity as a whole slides back into habitual grooves with fatal facility, she prudently set herself, after consultation with the Doctor, to the making over of Rodney, not content to resign that process to the hand of Fate. Rodney himself had found the kernel that unforgettable night. Very well—it remained for Aunt Ann to make it grow and by way of an initial step, she made a list of her brother's petty indulgences.

Winter nights, under the horrified battery

of her nieces' eyes, Aunt Ann calmly entrenched herself in the sacred Throne Chair and chatted to her brother of the sordid issues of the day. Mercilessly she laid before him the domestic mishaps from which he had always been shielded, casually demanding his advice. Rodney's answers were at first very vague and confused and a little resentful, but after the surprising discovery that any domestic problem upon which he failed to express a definite opinion, was laid upon the shelf to await his convenience no matter what temporary discomfort the delay entailed, they came somewhat more freely. Thus when a careless urchin with a sling shot had broken a studio window, the artist promptly summoned his sister; but the window was not repaired until Rodney measured the glass himself and telephoned an order for it.

Looking back, the aggrieved artist could not remember a time when he had not breakfasted by himself at ten. Yet Aunt Ann decreed a breakfast assembly at seven and after one or two futile and dignified attempts at rebellion, during which he went without any breakfast at all, he meekly appeared, avoiding his sister's cordial eyes.

Afternoon naps, said Aunt Ann crisply, were

an invention of the devil made to trap lazy women without mental resource; wherefore she briskly seized her alpenstock and trotted her brother forth in his napping hour upon healthful tramps. And again after futile protest Rodney went. After a while of his own accord he ceased begging special dishes, which were never forthcoming anyway, and ate the family dinner with the rest.

So much for the King's Throne Chair, his indolence and utter freedom from responsibility of any sort. They were soon things of the tranquil past to which Rodney found himself looking back with wistful longing. There remained the greatest problem of all, the artist's troublesome nerves and his painting, both of them as the Doctor dryly hinted, wholly imaginary possessions. And upon the first of these Aunt Ann made her next attack.

To mention of the artist's nerves Aunt Ann said "Bosh!" to no avail. No matter how frequently and severely *boshed*, the nerve hallucination continued. Finding this vagary so persistent, Aunt Ann betook herself and her alpenstock to the Doctor's office and returned with a clinical thermometer and much valuable information about nerves in general and Rodney's in particular. Thereafter, to his dismay,

when Rodney pleaded nerves Aunt Ann was sympathetic, took his pulse and his temperature, insisted upon his instant retirement to bed and sent for the Doctor. After one or two monotonous afternoons in a darkened room, with hourly doses of a singularly unpleasant nerve medicine, it was noticeable that Rodney's nerves were growing stronger. And after a time this vagary too flitted away with those other vanishing luxuries of the sultanic past.

But he clung to his painting.

"Like a child with a battered doll!" said Aunt Ann soberly to the Doctor. "'A poor thing but mine own!' As a boy, Roderick, he was perpetually reflecting some favorite character in fiction. If the hero of a book had a fetching swing of his shoulders, Rodney essayed to duplicate that swing. If the hero had any pronounced peculiarities in dress, that was pretty sure to crop out sooner or later and linger until some new fiction whim supplanted it. Sometime or other, I fancy," guessing better than she knew, "Rodney has read of an erratic handsome genius with nerves and temperament, who was exempt by reason of his art from the obligations of mankind; and he has fed upon that notion until it is well-nigh impossible to give it up. I have dissected every chromo

in the studio with brutal candor. He only colors and looks away. Meek and tractable now in everything else, he relapses into stony quiet when I mention his art.

“I suppose I’m getting sentimental myself, Roderick, but I vow there are times when I really do feel sorry for him. He’s so wistful it’s pathetic. All of his old air of gracious complacency is gone; he’s timid and uncertain. And sometimes he sits by the window for hours so harmless and forlorn that I simply have to go and pat him on the back, I feel so guilty, and tell him to chirk up a bit. And then he brightens up immediately, as if he were grateful for some attention that isn’t critical. Then we talk of Letty and how well she is getting along in the milder climate, and presently he’s off to write her one of his endless letters—and I feel better. He’s lonely of course and the girls are pretty quiet. I think they’re all a bit upset at Aunt Ann’s brazen villainy in managing father! Last week, with very little assistance from me, Rodney balanced the month’s accounts despite their sordidness! And those terrible twins—bless their sunny hearts!—they gleefully marched round and round him whistling a duet of encouragement, some rollicking tune they invented while they were painting the

house, and he suddenly began to laugh and seemed more cheerful than he has for weeks."

"Ann," said the Doctor shaking his head, "ye are doin' wonderful work, wonderful work! But dinna ye go to runnin' to heart instead of head or ye will spoil it all. The paintin' must go. If the man must have somebody or something to reflect we must get him another model. And it must not be a genius or a man with nerves."

So matters stood when Dame Fate stretched forth her hand and guided Aunt Ann to a book-case in Rodney's studio.

"Why, Rodney," she exclaimed, "I didn't know you had Raoul de Severac's books on art. I climbed a mountain with him."

Rodney looked up with interest.

"Best modern critic of art we have! And his books on technique are brilliant."

Aunt Ann nodded.

"Climbs as well as he writes, too. . . . Would you — would you like to meet him and have him go over — your work. He lives in Washington Square and I know he'd come. . . . We were excellent friends."

"Ann!"

"Would you, really?" But Aunt Ann avoided his eager gaze.

There was a touch of the old bombast in his answer and a hint of reproach.

"It would be a privilege," said Rodney, "for he knows good work when he sees it."

Aunt Ann sighed.

"Heroic," she said a little later to the Doctor, "but I'm sure it will do the trick. Raoul's brutally candid. I wonder I didn't think of him before. I told him all in the letter —"

"Cruel," said the Doctor, "but kind. Like a rainbow followin' the tears of a cloud!"

So he came to Auburnia to lunch — this slight, dark Frenchman with nimble feet and nimbler mind — and Rodney — the old Rodney for a time at least — basked in the greatness of his guest.

It was a pleasant luncheon in the bright, old-fashioned dining room with the Doctor a fourth.

"For you must come," Aunt Ann had implored, "or I shall not be brave enough at the end."

Over his coffee Raoul consulted his watch.

"It is of very great sorrow," he regretted, "that I have promised De Savigny to reach his beastly studio tea at four. Otherwise," he bowed to Aunt Ann, "I should linger on, greatly to enjoy your pleasant hospitality."

Rodney pushed back his chair with a smile.

"But," he reminded, "before you go —"

Raoul nodded.

"I am most happy," said he, "to be of service."

"Remember," warned Aunt Ann under her breath as he passed her chair, "remember, it must be the brutal truth!"

"Rest assured," murmured De Severac, "it shall. For you have said it. Here to be cruel is to be kind."

Smiling he followed Rodney to the studio.

It was swift and merciless work. One sweeping glance at the canvases arrayed for his inspection and Raoul shuddered. Then in his precise, accented English he began the dissection, one by one.

"There is no proportion," he summarized, shaking his head hopelessly. "There are meaningless little waggles here and there, a curious conception of color values, perniciously unique! Composition, perspective — Ugh, monsieur!" lamented Raoul, "how could you? Mon Dieu, how could you? Mediocrity in art — it is even as a great and noble instrument in the unskilled hands of a man of deafness. It jars! Voila! . . . *pardonnez moi*, Monsieur! You would have the truth. You have said it at luncheon. . . . *Voila tout!*"

Rodney dropped heavily into the Throne Chair with a sigh and a gulp and stared at the mocking line of canvases. Nor did he know when the Frenchman left. How long he sat there he was unaware but after a time he was conscious of a kindly hand upon his shoulder. It was the Doctor, his keen eyes sympathetic.

"Man Rodney," said the Doctor gently, "'tis verra hard, I dinna doubt, but after all, 'tis for the guid of ye. Ye must see now surely with Raoul's verdict that ye canna paint!"

Rodney winced.

"Now, man," went on the Doctor briskly, "I would have ye face the bitter fact squarely and have done with it. Ye have hung yourself heavy with chains of delusion about yourself and your art, never realizin', I take it, that ye impeded yourself along with the others. But now with Aunt Ann a-breakin' the cruel chains for ye one by one and the daffy little Frenchman strippin' ye so frankly of the final one, 'tis time, say I, ye dig up the kernel again and stand up confident upon the two guid feet of ye, a man before his Maker!"

"Oh, Roderick," blurted Rodney, stung into confession by the Doctor's kindness, "it — it is something I have lived with day by day. I — I can not give it up now like a threadbare

coat. After all, it is the only thing in life that is all my own."

"Hum!" said the Doctor. "Hum. . . . Well, that is verra true but 'tis a time, man, when ye must look to the high and holy courage of Mother Rose and profit by the lookin'. Canna ye see the difference yourself? Here is dear Mother Rose spendin' her life without a murmur in service to the needs of others. And then, if ye will just pardon my plain speakin' once more, for all I've browbeaten ye so frequent — here again is yourself with but a mediocre facility for fashionin' colored chromos such as these fearful canvases about me, and ye selfishly bend every life about ye to serve an indifferent gift. And then when the Frenchman, keen and critical and brilliantly gifted as he is, tells ye the tragic truth, ye canna even then give up this wicked delusion about your paintin'. Look high above ye, man Rodney," finished the Doctor, dramatically raising his arm, "look high to where dear Mother Rose stands in her spotless, snow-white robes glorified with the light of God-given sacrifice, turnin' her beautiful face away from love itself with a sunny smile, that she may minister bravely to the needs of her father's house. Will ye have one of your own bairns so much braver than yourself?"

"Rose is better and braver than I," said Rodney quietly. "She is like her mother." And he stared at the fire, his finely-chiseled lips quivering like those of a wistful child.

"Man Rodney," pleaded the Doctor, "let us strike while the iron is guid and hot. Let us go behind the barn, pile all the studio fixin's together and burn the lot of them. Eh, Rodney, what d'ye say, man? In a roundabout way, ye mind, 'twas the paintin' after all that almost led to the death of Letty."

"Yes," nodded Rodney, "it helped to blind me."

"And ye will help me burn 'em all, chromos and palette and all the other whirligigums with which ye have been wont to attend to your artin'?"

For an interval in which the Doctor feared desperately for the outcome, Rodney stared tragically at the fire. It was bearing away delusions.

"Yes," he whispered at last, his lips white, "it is — is better so. De Severac knows. He could not be wrong. I — I respect his judgment above all others. We — we will burn them all."

With a great sigh of relief the Doctor flung back the studio door and with a canvas beneath

each arm and pockets sagging with the pettier paraphernalia of Rodney's trade, betook himself to the holocaust behind the barn. Rodney followed, white and silent.

Canvas, paints, brushes, easel and all! The Doctor crowned the pile with a book of sketches.

"Hum," said he with sympathy, "'twould doubtless seem a verra great pity to burn perfectly guid paints and spotless canvas before it has been used, but, Rodney, I would not give ye a single chance to backslide. Mortals, no matter what, backslide frequent."

Whistling a little self-consciously the Doctor struck a match and Rodney drew back, wincing. Before he could protest and retract in a moment of panic, the inflammable mass was shooting forth tongues of flame. Shuddering, Rodney turned away from the sickening sight of it, swallowing manfully. Clothes prop in hand the Doctor prodded the malodorous mass into crackling activity and watched it burn down quite to ashes, growing a little fretful at the conduct of his throat.

"Oh, deil take it!" he reflected morosely, "I canna help feelin' mortal sorry for him. I have not seen such a forlorn and broken man this many a day. If he would but speak a bit and not stand there with his back against the

barn, a-starin' so fixed and queer at the fire and me and my wicked clothes pole as if I were the Hornie himself pokerin' with a pitchfork, I dinna think I would mind so much. . . . Hum! There's Ann upstairs at the window. Doubtless she'll be mortal surprised at the burnin' notion, for it did not come over me until I looked at the fire in the studio with man Rodney himself blisterin' beside it so sorrowful and starin' at his chromos."

And as Aunt Ann realized the portent of the burning mass she promptly reached for a pair of glasses in a jardiniere by the window and stared at Rodney and the Doctor.

"Roderick," she decided "is probably the most unexpected man I shall ever know. How he persuaded Rodney to the making of that funeral pyre is utterly beyond me. It's a good cause but I do wish Roderick in his enthusiasm hadn't taken the best clothes pole in the yard to poker with."

So perished the paraphernalia of Rodney's art, and the studio, denuded now of all the picturesque trimmings upon which he had fed his monumental vanity, became for him but a barren room shrining a memory.

Shaking at the sight of it, Rodney dropped into a chair by the table and looked tragically

about him. Then his head slid forward upon his arms and King Rodney, fallen from his high estate, wept such bitter, scalding, racking tears as men rarely shed. Touched by the man's utter collapse, the Doctor walked away to the fire.

"Roderick," said Rodney at last, "I always meant to repay Letty with the fruits of that — of that work we burned. You will not believe it, but I know no other way to work. It was the only hope I had. I fancied Rose could show me how, she is so clever, and — and I could always draw a little. But there is nothing — nothing at all I can do myself."

"There is much that you can do!" said the Doctor warmly. "Ye can make of yourself a self-respectin' man and by and by I myself will find ye a job. Dinna mourn for your lost genius, man. Genius is but a twist of a man's brain for which he need not feel so mortal proud, for 'twas not of his own makin'. With some folks 'tis an excrescence and with you, man, to-day we have been gettin' rid of the troublesome, disfigurin' growth in a verra painful fashion. I mind me, Rodney, of a genius who fancied he was exempt from the obligations of mankind for decent livin', a genius mind ye, who would go scallawaggin' about in the olden

day, a-murderin' folk for love of it and gettin' himself off mortal easy account of his work. Myself I would have greatly enjoyed givin' the swaggerin', braggin' bully a fearful crack on the noddle and maybe knock his conceited notions clean out of his head along with his senses. I would like to have told him flat that to be a man is a greater achievement than to be a genius, for the one is something of your own hard work and the other ye canna help account of the brain twist. Moreover, there's no picture or book, no matter how mortal guid, that will repay for the selfish harm done to other folks. Now, man Rodney, I would have ye grant me pardon for many a wild moment when my sinful temper bolted away from me."

The Doctor held out his hand.

"Onward," he boomed dramatically, "onward to self-respectin' manhood."

Rodney, coloring, seized the hand. It was an offer of friendship sorely needed, and after all deep down in his heart he had always liked the Doctor.

"Onward," he faltered, "onward to self-respecting manhood."

Now the Doctor had once expressed a hope that Rodney would be so busy "mayorin'" the city that he must perforce give up his painting,

but like everything else which the Doctor planned, things came about conversely. With his painting but a bitter memory, Rodney turned to "mayorin'" the city by way of solace. Urged on by the Doctor, Marshall, the clever councilman-at-large from the Doctor's own ward, took the new mayor under his wing and taught him the A-B-C's of civic government. Stripped now by so many trials of the fatal optimism that had led to financial disaster years ago, Rodney's vision grew clearer and his judgment sounder. For Marshall was an excellent teacher and, thanks to the Doctor, knew his man.

Timidly at first, with Marshall, with Aunt Ann, with the Doctor advising, Rodney found his feet and stood upon them, eventually to be confronted by the crux of his administration, a tenement housing problem yearly and dishonorably solved by politicians. Backed by the Doctor, Rodney investigated tenement conditions, to expose in the columns of Bob's paper the system by which the tenement house owners evaded the law. An indignant cry went up for the popular panacea, commission government, and swift upon his revelation of graft and dishonesty the outraged voters at the polls made their formal demand for cleaner government.

"Man Rodney," said the Doctor, "yourself and Marshall have accomplished marvels. Ye have done what no other mayor before has been brave or guid enough to attempt. Ye have bucked the machine and exposed the sinful house facilities of Cleton. That touches me in a verra sore point, what with the bebbies dyin' and the plumberin' bad enough for the stable of Augeas."

"Marshall is pleased," said Rodney simply. "Do you think, now that I understand better, that I might be one of the five commissioners? It is two thousand dollars a year —"

The Doctor warmly pledged support.

"And after he is through commissionerin', if the city elects him as it should after his grand guid work among the tenements," the Doctor confided to Aunt Ann, "doubtless he will have had experience enough of one kind or another to hold down a job. I'm mortal pleased."

Aunt Ann wiped her eyes.

"I'm so proud," she said, "that I hardly know how to express it. I hope now that he won't find any disturbing model to reflect and so spoil it all. I don't suppose we can expect him to discard all the habits of a lifetime so readily."

"Aweel, Ann," philosophized the Doctor,

"maybe the man's done reflectin'. Ye canna tell."

But Rodney was not yet through with reflecting. There was presently an aristocratic twist to his diction, an elaborate courtesy in his manner to Aunt Ann and his daughters; and the mystified Doctor looked about for the model of it all.

"Doubtless some daffy book!" he decided, frowning. "Ann told me of his facility for reflectin' books. I hope the hero winna have any nerves and temperament or genius, or we may go slidin' back upon the rocks after all Ann's wonderful work."

But with the appearance of a pronounced southern drawl in the mayor's voice, the Doctor chuckled. Rodney was reflecting an occasional visitor to Auburnia, Colonel Ridgely, Lloyd's father!

"No doubt about it, Ann," exclaimed the Doctor, "I can see it now in the man's every move. What with Lloyd's father comin' north so frequent, Rodney has just come to admirin' him so that he canna help reflectin' his courtly manners. I mind me now, lookin' back, how Rodney stared and stared at the way Colonel Ridgely bowed so grand to his wife and spoke so gentle and precise. Ann, if ye value my

friendship, dinna ye dare criticize your brother's southern accent or his noble manner of speakin' or his courtly ways. With the colonel talkin' some of comin' north to be closer to Lloyd, we'll just dangle him constant before Brother Rodney's eyes. If the man must have somebody to reflect, he could not have a finer, courtlier model than Lloyd's father. And maybe if his art model lasted so long, this one will last him to his death. It would not hurt me to be doin' a bit of 'reflectin'' of my own, especially about troosers.

"Ah, Peggy, lass," he fretted on the way home, "I just canna help feelin' sorely dissatisfied with myself whenever I think of such a fine and courtly man as Lloyd's father. Such presence, Peggy, such dignity; no matter what, he just could not be unprofessional. He wasn't cursed with a degraded taste for ragged carpet slippers and ragged fur caps and, I take it, he would not think of scallawaggin' about behind such a piebald snailie as yourself. He has an air of distinction, Peggy, a real air of distinction."

Peggy drowsily flicked an ear and the Doctor began afresh.

"Ye maybe cast your comprehendin' eye upon his troosers at some time or other, Peggy?

None of your baggy knees for him such as you and I have at times noticed in others. Creases he had, Peggy, lass, creases which havin' shook out sufficient to be elegant, still had not shook out enough to resemble inflated balloonies. I would I knew the trick of deadlockin' them just at that point as Colonel Ridgely does. With me 'tis either a crease like the peak of a roof or no crease at all, deil take it!"

The Doctor shook the reins impatiently but Peggy, sensing his irritation, forgave him the indignity and ignored it.

"And, Peggy," went on the Doctor morosely, "I would I were not such a Paddy Blunt with my tongue. I would like much to discourse in high-soundin' phrases like Colonel Ridgely but I canna bow graceful without my old back creakin' a fearful snap like a blunderbuss, and I canna help bein' slangy, and I was cursed with a persistent love for the dialect of Bobby Burns. 'Tis not that I canna speak English, Peggy, if I have a mind to. 'Tis the fearful facility of my tongue for lapsin' into vernacular in moments of excitement. My brain and my clackin' tongue work together too swiftly for discretion and I canna always remember to tack on my g's. After all, Peggy, I'm a verra indifferent sort of person."

So Rodney continued to reflect Colonel Ridgely, and after five months in the mayoralty chair found himself placed once more upon his city's ticket with Marshall first and himself second in a preliminary list of ten selected at the primaries — five of whom would eventually be appointed commissioners at a special election in June.

“And since Rodney is second upon the list, I dinna doubt he will be elected one of the five commissioners, with Marshall as his chief,” pointed out the Doctor. “I’m verra glad.”

Rodney wrote the prospect to his wife in an honorable, courageous letter of expiation which Mother Letty read with tearful eyes.

“It was only when I was tired and worried,” she whispered, “that I ever doubted.”

“And Mother is so proud of Dad,” wrote Rose to the Doctor near the end of May, “that she has improved wonderfully since the letter came. She read it and cried and read again and cried again and then went to bed with the letter under her pillow. Dr. Rawlinson says she is so much better that now perhaps we can come home in June.

“If only Mother would not try so hard to remember! It has kept her back and made her pitifully nervous and Dr. Rawlinson scolds now

whenever she mentions it. If I leave her alone for an instant, she is frowning and groping about in her memory and so often she murmurs to me, 'If I could only remember! Oh, Rose, if I could only remember! It's so very essential, I'm sure, that I should.' And at night she dreams of it. At times she wakes flushed and excited — almost on the verge of remembering and when she finds that she's awake and that it has slipped her mind again, she cries and sometimes I can not soothe her.

"Jerry has been to see us on his sketching trip through the South. Dear, gloomy, disgusted chap! He said that the Cave and the Music Box were so gloomy and fretful with Larry away and everything gone wrong, and that Quin quarreled with him about his pinochle habits and the janitor so persistently objected to his oboe, that he couldn't stand it. . . . But he thinks the South is even gloomier.

"Larry writes me from Thibet. Down through Arabia into India and Thibet he has gone, camping in the desert with a horde of Arabs. Nearly a year since he went away and still he writes nothing at all of coming home. He speaks some of going back into Southern India or on to China."

"Deil take the daffy thing she canna remem-

ber!" stormed the Doctor. "Here was I so secure a-thinkin' since Mother Rose told me nothing more of it for so long, that maybe her mother did not fuss about it now. 'Tis verra queer — verra queer indeed. I will write straightway to my guid friend, Douglas Mac-Ilvaine. Doubtless 'twill be more in his line than mine. And once 'tis all settled, with Letty quite well and Mother Rose no longer bound so close to nursin' her poor mother, and when the Weston house is changed about, with Letty managin' a woman's job and Rodney supportin' her with his commissionerin' money if he's elected, I will send my poor lad over the seas a cablegram that will bring him home with all speed or my name is not Roderick Glenmuir!"

## Chapter 36

### *Another rose-party*

COME, come, Peggy, lass," admonished the Doctor, "wake up! Guid faith, ye're none too popular with the guid wife now and if ye doze and fall down in sight of home, I'll dine to the tune of your failings. Shake a leg, lass, shake a leg."

Peggy stumbled drowsily over a pebble and the Doctor turned to the man at his side, a Scot with a bushy mane of hair and brows and dark compelling eyes, keen behind his glasses.

"'Twas mortal guid of ye to come, Duggie!" he exclaimed. "Mortal guid!" Then, catching the white flutter of gowns upon the veranda of the Hame, he squared his shoulders, tightened the reins and uttered a brisk command to Peggy, seeking to stampede her into a smart and professional arrival. Quite in vain. Peggy, alas! stopped short, turned and blinked at him in grotesque and gentle inquiry. The Doctor's dream of dashing grandly up the driveway for the edification of his wife and daughter and his guest vanished. When Peggy elected to move

on, in an ignominious amble, the Doctor glanced furtively at his wife, whose eyes were twinkling.

"Jeannie," he called, subtly including his wife, "dinna laugh at your poor old father. 'Tis not respectful."

"Peg — asus!" said Mrs. Glenmuir and the Doctor bridled.

"Jeannie," he complained, halting Peggy, "I would not have your mother so verra apt with her pointed references to winged horsies. Peggy and I would greatly prefer to ramble about in our own way and I wouldn't swap my piebald snailie for old flighty Pegasus any day!"

Midst a welcoming jubilee from his collies, the Doctor alighted and flung the reins to Jamie, aptly quoting:

*"Upon a bonny day in June,  
When wearing thro' the afternoon,  
Twa dogs, that were na thrang at hame  
Forgathered ance upon a time!"*

"Down, Cæsar, down with ye! My friend Duggie has creases! Now, Douglas, man, I would have ye meet my wife and daughter and presently ye will see my bonny roses closer. I remember well how mortal fond of flowers ye were as a lad, even though they had no compli-

cated souls for you to dissect and blether wise about."

Douglas MacIlvaine laughed and turned appealingly to Mrs. Glenmuir.

"Have pity on me, Mrs. Glenmuir, and stop him, do!" he begged. "Ever since I stepped from the train he's been making slighting references to soul dissection."

"Dinna mind me, Douglas, lad!" said the Doctor unexpectedly, patting his guest's broad shoulder. "I'm just so mortal proud of ye, man, I must blether a bit about ye. Whenever I read in my *Medical Journal* of that eminent psychologist, Douglas MacIlvaine, et cetera, et cetera, I just gloat a bit and brag to Agnes. Still I canna altogether forgive ye, Duggie, for deliberately foregoin' the practice of medicine when ye had such a wonderful gift for it. 'Tis a grand guid profession, man, for all ye prefer to analyze the mind and follow your new-fangled psychotherapy. I mind me how ye hypnotized Sandy MacPherson in Glasgow, starin' at him until we could just fair see a line of dots leadin' from your own eyes to Sandy's. And by and by, after ye had chatted with him so mortal uncanny in his trance, ye up and told him why he could not sleep of nights. 'Twas account of some psychic disturbance he'd been

treasurin' up in his mind. That always seemed to me a most wonderful performance."

"And Sandy," laughed MacIlvaine, "retaliated by sleeping the clock around next night and reporting me to the faculty for making him do it."

"Well, Jamie, my lad," said the Doctor, "what would ye, eh?"

Jamie, cap in hand, scanned the group upon the veranda eagerly.

"I would have ye see the roses with the sunset light upon them!" he exclaimed. "'Tis a sight for sair e'en. I did not think that any year could be so mortal guid for the flowers, though for matter of that the daffy bugs are worse this year than ever before."

"Just one thing I canna understand, Douglas, man," said the Doctor as they followed Jamie to the rose-garden. "I canna see how ye came to speak such beautiful English. Ye had no inconsiderable burr of your own, man, in Glasgow."

"The roses!" reminded Mrs. Glenmuir tactfully and the Doctor in a glow forgot his envy.

Jamie, finding his usual confidant busy, bitterly complained to Jean about the rose-bugs.

"Ah, Miss Jeannie," he fretted, "I canna help feelin' fair sick about their antics. And

they have with them this year a big, heavy-set beetle with a scowlin' face, who seems to be a bit of a leader. I would I could find him and point him out to ye, he's so desperate lookin' and so mortal bad."

"Why not organize a posse and round him up?" asked Jean with a twinkle.

"Aweel, Miss Jeannie," evaded Jamie, ashamed of his dislike for killing, "they would doubtless hold a caucus of all the beetles in Christendom over his body and then I would have more of the daffy things about than before."

Through sunlit hedges of roses strolled the Doctor and his guest, inspecting and admiring, until at the sound of carriage wheels the Doctor, alert for the welcome sound, wheeled in excitement and resigning MacIlvaine to his wife charged off across the lawn.

The Weston carriage was creaking up the driveway with Rose and Mother Letty waving.

"Oh, Letty, lass," exclaimed the Doctor, "I'm just so mortal pleased with ye. Ye have even a bit of healsome color in your face and your pretty brown eyes are as clear and bright as a young lass for all your snow-white hair. Grand and guid to get home again, is it not, Letty, with our splendid commissioner here

a-beggin' me so persistent to quarrel with Rawlinson and coax ye home before it was guid policy to have ye come?"

"Oh, I am so glad to get home!" said Mother Letty, ready to cry for joy of it all. "And the girls are on the way, Roderick. They're walking."

"Duggie!" called the Doctor. "Hurry a bit. . . . Letty, my verra guid friend Douglas MacIlvaine. Ye have all doubtless heard tell of him, for the daffy man's a celebrity. My patient, Douglas, of whom I have told ye so much — and Leddy Rose! And let me likewise make ye acquent with Aunt Ann and her alpenstock — we like best to call her Aunt Ann, Duggie, 'tis so much friendlier. . . . And Mr. Weston, ex-mayor of Auburnia. And this is baby Tavia. . . . Now, Jeannie, if ye will just surrender Leddy Rose to me I would be greatly obliged. . . . Well, Rose," the Doctor lowered his voice amid the pleasant chatter of the others and glanced searchingly at Rose's face, "ye have had a verra hard winter takin' care of Mother Letty, eh, lass? Ye're a bit pale, I'm thinkin', for all the sweet cheeriness of your face."

"A little tired," owned Rose. "Not very. How pleasant and cheerful everything is with

the roses all in bloom again and the dear old elms so green! And there's Flora on the porch. I must speak to her."

The Doctor fancied he had never seen Flora's face so gentle.

"Ah, Miss Rose," she exclaimed, "Auburnia will be a different place, now, lass, with your sunny face about again. I have missed ye sorely myself and so has Jamie. And, Mrs. Weston, ye could not look stronger and better. It's a guid day for all of us."

Came a tremendous whistling now and up beneath the broad, green elms marched the Doctor's lasses with the whistling twins in the lead and Bob sauntering on behind them, batoning the white-gowned cavalcade lazily up the walk.

"My! My! My!" The Doctor rubbed his hands. "'Tis a verra great day. What with my old friend Duggie consentin' to honor my rose-party, and Letty and Leddy Rose homin' in accordance with my plans, and the pretty lasses so merry, I'm just that excited I canna breathe guid. Now, Duggie, if ye will follow Flora to your room and hurry a bit we'll all have dinner."

It was a dinner bright with roses and toasts and chatter but the Doctor plainly had some-

thing on his mind. At dusk he drew Mother Letty aside.

"Letty, lass," said he, resting a gentle hand upon his patient's shoulder, "ye will greatly oblige me by steppin' into the office for a spell. Ye will find my verra guid friend MacIlvaine there already and I ask your indulgence with his ways and whims. Doubtless ye winna just understand him entirely at first but I beg of ye, if ye value your health and your peace of mind, to trust him greatly even as ye would trust myself. Before he takes a single step he will explain it all to ye as I have pledged him. He's here, dear lass, to help ye resurrect that thing ye canna remember."

Instantly at the mention of this dread chimera of many tortured days and nights, Mother Letty furrowed her brow in painful concentration, then with a quick, bright smile of utter confidence in the Doctor, she passed fearlessly into the office to MacIlvaine.

"I greatly regret that old Duggie preferred to have her alone," fretted the Doctor with his eyes glued upon the door. "Myself I would like to be with him watchin' him make passes and dots with his keen eyes to put Letty to sleep, as he so graphically described it. And I would like greatly to hear his tactful questions

as he leads her on. 'Tis but a whig-ma-doodle notion of his that he must be alone. I know well enough it is! But 'tis professional etiquette, deil take it, that I must respect it."

Barred from the test of his brilliant friend's psychotherapy the Doctor frowned and fidgeted, tried patiently to listen to Bob's ragtime and consulted his watch a score of times.

Five — ten — fifteen minutes — a half hour — three quarters! Why in Heaven's name was the man so slow? Fifty minutes.

"Verra well!" decided the Doctor. "I will rap upon the door. 'Tis beyond the power of mortal to sit patient and wait any longer."

Nevertheless, by way of discipline he sat rigid for another interval and found reward at the end of it. The office door swung back and MacIlvaine appeared upon the threshold.

"Did ye find out the daffy thing she canna remember, Duggie?" demanded the Doctor instantly.

MacIlvaine smiled and indicated a pad of notes.

"She was readily hypnotized," said he, "and with such constant and terrible concentration upon the one thing, it was ready to tumble forth from her subconscious mind like a pea from an opened pod. In time, I think, under certain

reminiscent conditions, she would have recalled it suddenly of her own accord. Still, at first, I dared not dwell upon it at all, she grew so nervous, but bit by bit after a while we began hypnotically to live over again that rainy day when she fell, unconscious, in the office. But that too made her very restless and nervous and so by way of soothing her a little I took her back to the day before, thinking to lead her very gradually onward to the rainy afternoon which you rightly regard as the crux of the situation."

MacIlvaine consulted his pad.

"And first I learned that upon that day you had dropped in and spoken to her of one Davy Gordon, and a little later of how you had been called in to a directors' meeting to attend an apoplectic director named Harvey who fumed and talked wildly of forty per cent and Don Quixotes in Wall Street."

The Doctor nodded.

"On with your story, Duggie, man!" he encouraged. "On with your story!"

"And then I learned that Mrs. Weston regarded this occurrence as extremely significant, inasmuch as it was a notorious fact in the street that Harvey had been fighting a dividend in his company ever since it was formed ten years

ago. Next in her mind I ran across the Colfax loan and the necessity of her having twenty-one thousand dollars in ten days to pay it. So in desperation she drew out the thirty-four hundred dollars she had saved to pay on her yearly note and, figuring that so little of the total was but a drop in the bucket anyway, went to a broker and bought seventeen hundred shares of Alabama Coal and Iron on margin upon the strength of your significant tip."

"Alabama Coal and Iron!" cried the Doctor. "Ye're sure, man Duggie, ye're sure?"

"Seventeen hundred shares of Alabama Coal and Iron," nodded MacIlvaine, "at eighty, offering thirty-four hundred dollars margin. It dropped a point the following day. By this time we were slowly drifting back to that ominous rainy afternoon and before the patient realized it, she was watching the tape and telling me that Alabama Coal and Iron had soared to one hundred and forty-two and then her voice trailed off and she began to cry. I spoke sharply to her and she burst forth desperately, 'Tell Scanlon to sell. Oh! tell Scanlon to sell, for the stock may drop!' That is the thing she was trying most to remember. She bought the stock under the name of Letitia Manning and the broker's receipt is in the pocket of a

black coat she hasn't worn since she came home ill."

"Scanlon — Scanlon ye say? We must look him up. . . . Hum. . . . Wall Street. . . . River Drive. He'll likely be home. . . . I'll phone from the library, Duggie, then she winna be bothered."

The connection was slow. When at last it came the Doctor's patience was nearing an end. Over the wire Scanlon corroborated Letitia Manning's purchase of seventeen hundred shares of Alabama Coal and Iron.

"Now I would have ye hold the wire," said the Doctor to Scanlon. "Duggie, can she come to the wire and give him the order to sell?"

"No," said MacIlvaine, "she certainly can not. She's over-excited now. Tell him she'll personally wire the order in the morning before the market opens."

The Doctor delivered the message and rang off.

"And Scanlon says," he exclaimed in wild excitement, "that at noon of the day followin' her order to him, Alabama Coal and Iron declared a dividend of forty per cent after ten uneventful years and Harvey he was down sick with temper at his home at bein' so defeated after years of fightin' against it. And the stock

soared to one hundred and forty-two, man Douglas, with the market wild and crazy at such an unexpected splurge. Now it hangs at one hundred and forty, with Letty makin' sixty dollars upon every share if she sells immediate. One hundred and two thousand dollars," thundered the Doctor. "One hundred and two thousand dollars! I canna, *canna* believe it. And the dividend of forty per cent; sixty-eight thousand more. And all account of my droppin' in to see Davy and tellin' Letty of the Don Quixotes in Wall Street. Stupid gowk I am that I did not think a bit of it myself. Guid faith, I must tell the folks."

And tell them he did, but to Rodney the good news had its bitter kernel of irony for many a day.

"What would be the matter with the glum face of ye, man?" demanded the Doctor. "Are ye not glad with the rest of us about Letty's uncommon guid luck and the grand guid fact that all of your money troubles are over forever?"

"It — it is not that," said Rodney. "But, Roderick, I — I had planned so to atone to her, doing it all myself. And now —"

"Ye mean ye winna ever be able to support Letty as she so bravely supported you, the

lass havin' money of her own? . . . Hum.  
. . . Well, that is verra true but, man Rodney," warned the cautious Doctor, "ye can work just the same, money or no, for now that ye have no paintin' to fill your mind, I would not see ye vitiated again by indolence. If ye keep busy commissionerin' and are a self-respectin' man, I take it Letty would not ask more of ye. If Letty is quite herself again, Rodney, ye might fetch her from the office. The folks, I take it, are just longin' to beam at her!"

With the beaming in full swing the Doctor inconspicuously departed for the office. Here behind closed doors he rang up the Music Box.

"Whist, Grant," he urged, "I know verra well the lads said they would greatly prefer to bide at home away from my party, 'twould be so mortal painful to meet the lasses; but now I would have ye all attend in a body. . . . 'Tis imperative. Guid faith, ye canna guess offhand how verra imperative it is! There is grand guid news. . . . No, I canna trust myself to tell ye by phone. I will say just this: 'Twill greatly alter the lives of all of ye. . . . Yes, the lasses are all here, flockin' proud about their mother — for guid reason too. . . . Jerry is home? . . . Guid, he canna be gloomy

to-night when I have told him the news. . . . Aweel, tell him to bring the sketchin' friend, too, whoever he is. . . . Garret Van Duyn. . . . Well, man Garry is verra welcome. . . . Grant, I winna rest content until ye have all come and patched things up with the Westons. And to-morrow I'm cablin' Larry. . . . Now I must ring off. My party guests are arrivin'. I hear the colonel boomin' outside and I canna linger bletherin' here with ye. Besides, I would see all the faces when they hear the news. . . . I will expect ye all in fifteen minutes by the clock and if ye dinna come, I will wheel out my motor and come a-whirligiggin' swift and sudden after ye!"

Twenty minutes later came the whir of Grant's motor in the driveway and the Doctor, marshaling his lads into the office with an air of intrigue, melodramatically closed the door and related a tale of Alabama Coal and Iron that dispersed the gloom from Jerry's brow. And Quin, snapping off his glasses with the old gesture of energy, shook hands first with Grant and then with everybody else and finally led a cheer that upset the guilty Doctor.

"Whist, ye daffy lads!" he exclaimed. "Dinna ye go to hurrahin' like that again! I dinna wish my Agnes to know that I've cor-

raled ye all here and am hard at work again upon my matchmakin'. The poor leddy is afraid to have me open my mouth any more, I have such a facility for gettin' into pickles. And now, lads, go forth every mother's son of ye to your coortin' again and dinna let me hear of a single failure after the fearful winter we've all been through. Hum. . . . Now I dinna wish to meddle, laddies, ye know that well, I'm sure, but would any of ye consider it sinful and presumptuous if I begged ye all to report your progress to me a bit later? I will be so mortal anxious about it all that I winna rest content until I have heard whether or no this final installment of your eventful sweet-heartin' has gone guid."

And report they all did, one by one, with glowing faces. Norman alone looked a trifle crestfallen.

"And of course," he confided to the attentive Doctor, "I naturally felt that the rose-garden was the fitting spot for such an important crisis in my life, the knotting of the severed threads of my destiny as it were. So, with considerable gravity and dignity, I thought, I asked Lucia to go out to the rose-garden with me. And what," said Norman scandalized, "what do you suppose she said? She said: 'Rats, Norman

Ames! I'm not going out there to have you wave your arms around tragically in the moonlight and attract all the Doctor's guests to the show. Since you've stopped exercising, you're entirely too fat for that sort of thing. You're over-romantic anyway. You love me and I love you — we settled that a long while ago — and now that mother's miraculously won a fortune, that's all there is to it.' Lucia," finished Norman, conscious of a twinkle in the Doctor's eyes, "is a mighty practical, level-headed sort of girl. She's just the influence I need, for I'm beginning to think myself that I'm too romantic."

\* \* \* \* \*

To hear Doctor Roderick read from his thumbled and ragged volume of Burns was a rare treat at any time, for he read with such a wealth of love in his voice for his favorite bard that there was needful perhaps little else to thrill his audience. But to-night — with forefinger moving slowly along the line to keep the place and eyes roving from friend to friend — he read those selections which he deemed consistent with the time and the occasion and there was an irresistible note of jubilance that reached them all.

"The Rose-Bud" began it and to know how well the Doctor read his Burns, it was but necessary to catch certain surreptitious gleams of pride in the eyes of the colonel and the judge, whose occasional "I tell *you*, sir!" nods of the head suggested some great and personal achievement.

*"A rose-bud by my early walk,  
Adown a corn-enclosed bark,  
Sae gently bent its thorny stalk,  
All on a dewy morning!"*

Scotch Jamie and Flora tiptoed into the dining room beyond to listen, convinced that they were unobserved but all the while in such plain view that one had but to twist his neck a bit to see them. And to hear the Doctor read the words "sae gently" and "all on a dewy morning," with a caress in his voice and his grizzled head thrown back, would have thrilled the most phlegmatic!

Then came "The Birks of Aberfeldy," and "A Red, Red Rose," "My Nanie's Awa'," and "Lassie Wi' the Lint-white Locks," till Jamie's eyes were moist with the tears of the exile and the Doctor himself put aside his book for a while before he read "To a Mountain Daisy."

“Guid faith!” he exclaimed once, “I would just have ye listen to this again!

*“When Cynthia lights wi’ silver ray  
The weary shearer’s hameward way,  
Through yellow waving fields we’ll stray  
And talk o’ love, my dearie, o.”*

“Ah!” with a wondering shake of his grizzled head, “Bobby Burns is fair uncanny with his word pictures. Canna ye just see the tired man trampin’ homeward through the heather with the moonlight upon him? It will count but a wee twenty-four words and yet he weaves into them more than one bonny picture. There is the tired shearer in the moonlight, an inferential picture of his work through the day reapin’ the corn in the sunlight and still another of the lovers strayin’ through wavin’ fields of moonlit grain in bonny Scotland! Guid faith, only Bobby Burns could do it!”

Rose touched him impulsively upon the arm.

“And now, Doctor Roderick,” she said, “we must have ‘The Auld Farmer’s New Year Greeting’ to that faithful old mare of his. You read that best of all.”

“Why, dear Leddy Rose,” exclaimed the Doctor, “there’s nothin’ in it of flowers and trees

and all that for a June party and besides —” with a sly dig at his wife’s disapproval of Peggy — “I wouldn’t wonder if it brought unpleasant ideas into the Leddy Glenmuir’s head. I have been told she owns an odd beastie of her own.”

But in the end he yielded.

Good fellowship and beaming faces, music and rejoicing and friendly chatter! Who could resist them? Certainly not an impetuous Scot with a passionate love for the customs of his people. So — what with Rodney dancing attendance upon his wife in the fashion of a certain southerner, with the peck o’ maut foaming high at last with a sparkle of cheer and “man Duggie” sharing with Letty the honors of the evening — it was quite too much for the Doctor and presently with an exuberant swirl of bagpipe music, down the stairs and through the hallway straight into the circle of Mrs. Glenmuir’s scandalized vision he came, gorgeously arrayed in the kilts and plaid of the Clan Gregarach. Red and black his tartan, fierce and terrible the claymore and dirk at his side and in the folds of his bonnet, cocked outrageously upon his head, bobbed the sign of his grandfather’s high estate, the eagle feather of a chieftain.

"Merciful Heavens!" reflected Mrs. Glenmuir, stricken dumb at the sight of him. "And I was so sure I had hidden those kilts away!"

Nothing daunted by his wife's horrified gaze, the Doctor, head and feet keeping time to the bagpipe, marched madly about among his laughing guests, bursting forth into song as he went, to a tune of his own making:

*"Oh, my coat and my vest, they are Scotch  
o' the best,  
O' pairs o' guid breeks I ha'e twa, man,  
And stockings and pumps to put on my  
stumps,  
And ne'er a wrang steek in them a', man."*

"Dinna mind me, Agnes, lass. I winna ever again break loose like this with my grandfather's fixin's. 'Tis such a night of rejoicin' as a man canna resist if he has mortal blood in his veins. And if Larry were but here my cup of happiness would be complete. Guid folk! I see by the smilin' faces of ye that ye dinna feel so critical about my costume. Colonel, ye're nothin' like so shocked as ye look. Now, Bobbie, lad, to the piano with ye. I would have all my guests sing out of the book of Scotch songs while I follow with my bagpipie."

"Flow Gently, Sweet Afton," "Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonny Doon," "Highland Mary" and "Whistle O'er the Lave o't," one by one the Doctor's favorite songs were rendered with a vim, the Doctor and his bagpipe following along as best he could, sometimes a bit fretful and explosive, sometimes expending a vast amount of breath with no result whatever and always, to the infinite relish of Colonel Huntley, a full bar behind the singers.

Later the Doctor retrieved caste by playing a pibroch more adapted to the irrationalities of his bagpipe.

"What is it?" demanded Colonel Huntley as the wild, martial strains took on a windy and somewhat irregular fierceness. "What's a pibroch, Peter?"

"War song," said the judge.

The colonel chortled.

"War song, eh? S'pose it means Roderick's having a battle with the bagpipe. Right!"

On the porch, smoking, for he felt stranded and lonely, Lloyd glumly listened to the singing and the bagpiping within.

"I say, Quin," he exclaimed as Quin came out upon the porch lighting a cigarette, "who in the deuce is this fellow Jerry picked up down South anyway. He's fairly good-looking but



*The Lovable Meddler*



I must say the way he hangs around Carol Weston makes me tired. I hate a man who deliberately selects a girl at a party like this and makes her conspicuous by his attentions, and that's exactly what Van Duyn's been doing to-night. Why, Great Guns! you can't get a glimpse of Carol without you see him trailing along at her heels. It's infernally bad taste."

"Carol likes him," said Quin. "Besides, you can't entirely blame Van Duyn. Carol, in that fluffy yellow thing she's wearing to-night, with those yellow roses in her hair, is simply ripping! And her color's gorgeous. She looks a lot like Aunt Ann. Garry thinks she's remarkably handsome and Carol's been very sweet and gracious to him. As for Garry himself, he comes of an old wealthy Dutch family of New Yorkers and he can paint like a streak. Jerry wants to coax him out to the Cave to live."

Lloyd flung away his cigar.

"Jerry," said he coldly, "loses his head about as easily as anyone I know. Think I'll go home. It's after eleven and I'm tired and sleepy. Shouldn't wonder by the general turtle-dove atmosphere of things if I'd have to ramble home by myself anyway.

"I never did think much of promiscuous

acquaintances," he went on after a while. "Always remind me of an experience a friend of Dad's had. He picked up a pleasant enough chap on the steamer one time and he turned out to be a horse-thief!"

"Oh, cheer up, Lloyd!" said Quin and reported the conversation to the Doctor.

"Think's he's goin' home, eh?" sputtered the Doctor. "Well, he shan't. I'm losing patience with Lloyd. There are times when he's as cantankerous as Ginger and he's so dinged proud of his fancy that he's a woman-hater that I feel like shakin' him a bit, he's so mortal stubborn about it. The whole truth of the matter is the lad's heels over head in love with Carol himself and he winna admit it. How'd he come to know so much about Garry to-night if he wasn't watchin' Carol's every move, tell me that! And he winna go home. I just winna have my pleasant party spoiled with him sulkin' off homewards so early. Doubtless with ye all so happy and so pleasantly occupied the poor lad feels out of it a bit. I must take him in hand myself."

"Whist, Carol," whispered the artful Doctor a little later, "would ye just slip out to the porch for me and beg Lloyd to wait a bit like a guid lad until I can speak with him? I canna

have him scallawaggin' off home so early. I would gladly go myself but I — er — I will be so mortal busy from now on distributin' scones and bannocks with Flora that I winna have time to catch him before he goes. Ye're a guid lass. I just knew well enough ye'd oblige me. Garry, lad, I would have your assistance with the movin' of this table."

Carol departed to do the Doctor's bidding, far too happy to harbor an ancient grudge.

"Surely you're not going home so early, Lloyd!" she exclaimed. "The Doctor sent me out to beg you to wait."

"Well," acknowledged Lloyd lamely, "I did think some of going but perhaps after all I won't. It was merely a whim."

Carol looked up at the summer moon riding through a milk-white fleece of clouds.

"Hasn't it been a wonderful evening, Lloyd! If only Larry were here too. I shan't forget it."

"Nor I," said Lloyd. "There are some things, of course, one can't forget." He glanced at Carol's face, beautiful and kindly in the moonlight. . . . Had she forgotten the feud?

"Carol," he said manfully, "I'd like awfully to apologize to you for the way I led you home

that day on Ginger's back. It — well — it's one of the things I can't forget. I often think of it but frankly I've never been brave enough to speak of it. I never realized how infernally presumptuous it was until — until long afterward. And then that day beneath the apple tree! I meant well enough, the Lord knows, but that of course doesn't in the least excuse my officious interference in your family affairs. I'd like to beg your pardon for that too. I thought," he glanced anxiously at the girl's dark, demure face, "I thought if you're willing we might bury that ridiculous feud and start afresh. I'd like to be friends and I'd like awfully to ride with you in the morning if you'll let me. I ride alone as a rule and it's getting on my nerves. I've watched you several mornings now on the horse your aunt gave you on your birthday and you're riding splendidly."

Carol held forth her hand.

"We were both very young and very silly," she said, her dark eyes friendly. "And of course I'll ride with you. I don't believe anyway that I was ever civil enough to thank you for rescuing me that day when Ginger ran away."

Through the open window floated the incau-

tious voice of a kilted cribbager bickering with his cronies.

“Dinna blether so, Colonel,” it said briskly. “I winna have ye a-pesterin’ Peter so persistent. What if he does have the edges of his cards so neat and even? I canna see that it interferes any with your playin’. On with the game, man, before Flora gets here with the goodies.”

“Hum!” said Carol very thoughtfully, “I thought the Doctor was going to help Flora distribute scones and bannocks!”

## Chapter 37

*Of the great Indian liner, Singapore, and a  
quiet water-garden*

WELL," commented the impatient Doctor to his lads, "I have just this much to say: I could dock a boat better myself. Look, would ye, look at the daffy tug! Buzz! buzz! up and down and round about and all this while with my troosers gettin' baggier and my collar meltin', we must wait upon the pier in the fearful heat. I just haven't any patience left and I canna see how the rest of ye can stand there a-smilin' so mortal cheerful. Ye would think the lot of us had come to South Brooklyn with the sun blisterin' patterns on our backs, just to watch two boats scallawaggin' about to find a perfectly conspicuous pier. If I was not so mortal hot, I would scribble a bit of a note to the company right now that would stir 'em up considerable. . . . Ah!" with tremendous satisfaction, "she's comin' in!"

A cheer went up from the crowd as the great Indian liner Singapore swung heavily in, docking amid a general flutter of excitement.

"By George!" Jerry mounted a packing case. "There he is. See, Bob, over there!"

"Hum! By cracky, Jerry," exclaimed the excited Doctor, "ye're right. Give me a bit of foot-room on the case. Larry it is, lookin' about for the crowd of us and so bronzed and tall and handsome I'm mortal proud of him."

Instantly seven pairs of hands cupped seven pairs of lips and the crowded pier rang with an eager "Oh, you Larry!"

The bystanders smiled.

"There — hurrah, he's seen us!" cried Norman, and the Doctor and his lads waved hats and handkerchiefs.

Clumsily the gangplanks creaked down to the pier. In great perplexity the Doctor nudged Norman.

"Guid faith, Norman, lad," he whispered, staring, "what manner of man would that be there with Larry? See, him with a muslin muffin on his head instead of a hat. See, he's walkin' stately down the plank now behind Larry. . . . Hum. . . . Must be the King of the Whig-ma-doodles himself!"

"By George," said Grant with interest, "it's an Arab. Sort of dazed by the noise and excitement too —" and then they were all pushing forward to fall upon Larry with a cheer,

shaking his hand and banging him so much upon the back that the Doctor, who had been buzzing' about his nephew like a giant bumble-bee, felt called upon to protest.

"Give the poor lad a chance to breathe!" he commanded sternly. "Guid faith, Bobbie, what with the great bulk of ye loomin' so close to Larry, there's neither light nor air. Larry, canna ye turn your luggage over to an express-man and have it sent on to Auburnia without waitin'? Guid. I canna stand this swelterin' place another minute."

"Heavens and earth, Larry!" Quin held the traveler at arms' length, "you're as black as an Arab yourself, man. And who in thunder is the stately shadow?"

"Call him Butts," said Larry, laughing. "I do. His name's as full of links as a chain. Been with me a year and threatened to kill himself if I left him behind."

Larry spoke kindly to the Arab and the Doctor beamed.

"Hear the lad jabberin' heathen talk. Larry, ye mean to tell me ye brought him with ye all the way from the desert? Ye've a mortal kind heart and Buttsie has excellent discrimination. Now, get along with ye, lads. Quit buzzin' around Larry and parade behind me. I would

have Larry to myself. Mind ye, Roger, if someone doesn't tend Butts he will doubtless be kidnapped for a side show."

And Butts, whose dusky eyes had never once left Larry's face, fell gravely in behind the Doctor, with the Doctor's lads closing up behind him in protective files.

"Larry, lad," said the Doctor as they filed forth into the street, "I would I were gifted with words to tell ye how mortal glad I am to see ye. But I could not hope to do it. I doubt me if Bobbie Burns, with all his grand guid gift of words, could swing such a job himself. And I must tell ye, dear lad, ye have won a splendid victory. I can see it by the face of ye."

"Well," said Larry, "the monasteries and philosophers of the East have a thing or two to teach us yet. And to me the desert, with its changeless calm and quiet, is a sort of discipline in itself."

"There are lines of strength and courage about your mouth. I take it the turbulent steel of ye found its temperin' across seas. Maybe, Larry, it has all been for the best. Who may say? Laddie, there is so much to tell ye from the time poor Mother Letty dropped down in the office until the time I cabled ye to come home

with all possible speed and wed dear Leddy Rose, that I dinna know just where I shall begin."

But the Doctor, who in reality always found it easier to begin than to finish, soon found himself launched upon his story, indignantly waving back those bolder members of his band who essayed a word or so. Even when the train drew into Auburnia, the Doctor felt that there were most unsatisfactory gaps all along his story.

Now, to Larry's astonishment, although the Doctor and his lads alighted from the train at his very heels, they melted mysteriously away as if by prearranged advice. And left to himself, Larry, quite forgetting Butts, who had haughtily ignored the frantic signals of the Doctor, hailed a cab as the Doctor had predicted and went rattling northward to the Westons.

The old house was very quiet, the drowsy flowers nodding in the summer air. Curtains flapped lazily behind the open windows. Noiselessly, Larry halted by the hedge. Yes, Rose was there beneath the willow in the water-garden, the inevitable basket of darning in her lap.

Larry swung back the rustic gate and stepped

within, conscious of the heavy scent of water lilies. Rose turned, then with the color flooding wildly to her face, she was on her feet, basket and darning sliding with a splash into the pool unheeded. But it was typical of Rose's sweet and cheerful sanity that she did not lose her poise.

"Oh, Larry!" she said, holding forth her hands to greet him. "Oh, Larry!"

Larry imprisoned the trembling hands within his own.

"Well," said he gently, "well, Leddy Rose!"

"And the Doctor said he did not think you could possibly get in until to-morrow."

"The Doctor," said Larry, "knew better. But he loves surprises."

Larry drew her closer.

"Well," said he, smiling down into the brave, brown eyes that scorned to hide their message of love and welcome. "Well! So the brave little soldier, having won her battle, is through fighting, and now the lovelorn sentry who lacked at first the courage to fight, may be called in from the lonely outpost."

Rose nodded, her cheeks like the petals of the rose whose name she bore.

"Oh, Larry, my brave boy!" said this astonishing girl at last, "after all, what have

I ever done to merit such wonderful happiness? Ah, it seems somehow as if it could not possibly be true!"

Neither of them heard the sound of carriage wheels or a rasp and cough.

"Oh, I know well enough ye'll forgive me," said the Doctor at last from the hedge, "but I could not wait. It seemed that I just must feast my eyes upon the two of ye together or go quite mad a-waitin'. What with us a-slippin' away to give ye a clear coast, Larry, I had verra great difficulty controllin' my excitement. And, Larry, ye went rollin' off, a-leavin' poor Butts stranded on the curb with the newsboys shootin' pebbles at the muslin muffin on his head and him jabberin' and shriekin' for help till I heard him myself behind the station. And straightway I rushed up and rescued him and I took a carriage then myself and delivered him at the Music Box. My! My! Would ye see the poor commissioner's socks floatin' wet and neglected about the pool, and the basket and all t'other whirligigums tangled in the lilies! Well, well, I did surprise ye, eh, Leddy Rose? God bless the pair of ye!"

So the willow that had watched the shipwreck of these lovers, watched the barque of their love — a love strengthened and hallowed

by sacrifice — ride gloriously into port. And moved by the summer wind the old tree spread leafy branches of benediction above them.

## Chapter 38

### *The Bridal Rose*

**A**N AUTUMN moon hung high above the water-garden. It shone in at the checker-board windows of the Weston house upon a wealth of roses. Smilax and autumn leaves garlanded doors and mantels, all the work of Rose's sisters, who had scorned to consign this final task to alien fingers.

"We must marry the dear lass off with a million roses!" the Doctor had said largely. "For my pretty lass, Agnes, she is the verra fairest Rose of all."

Above stairs in the old-fashioned bedroom so reflective of her home-keeping heart stood Mother Rose so fair and sweet and gentle in her trailing gown of satin that Aunt Ann, crossing to the bed where lay the great square of Carrickmacross lace waiting to veil the bride, with tear-filled eyes, kissed the girl on the cheek.

But it was Mother Letty at last who pinned the heavy lace upon the girl's fair hair with a tightening of her throat. After all, in the

passionate mother heart of her there was a separate shrine for Mother Rose.

"Dear Mother," said Rose, kissing her mother's forehead, "please don't look so tearful, dear, on my wedding night. How pretty you must have looked in this dear old lace veil when you and Dad were married."

"As sweet and pretty as a flower!" nodded Aunt Ann briskly. "Now, Letty, I know very well you're on the verge of tears. I vow and declare I am myself but here's our dear girl so calm and sweet and cheerful that I for one feel heartily ashamed. Now, Letty, you run along and get the girls together; the carriages will be here any minute. A prettier batch of bridesmaids I've never seen and Tavia looks like a fairy. And you'd better just see if Rodney is fully appareled. He's pretty much excited and he's been battling some with his tie."

In the Cave and the Music Box the excitement was intense.

"Well, by George," said Jerry, "we're having some time marrying off old Larry all right and by the time I've married off the rest of you and arranged some little similar affair for myself I expect to be a nervous wreck. Now, Uncle Shad, where in blazes are my cuff links? So, Roger Washington Brett! You

have them in your own cuffs, eh? R-r-robber!"

In the Music Box, Grant and Quin and Lloyd were tying and untying cravats, calling back and forth all sorts of advice to one another and chaffing Bob, who in the responsible capacity of best man was trying to persuade the smiling groom that he was nervous. And Butts, dismissed by Larry, stalked gloomily from room to room in a hopeless effort to assist the others.

Jerry, arriving from the Cave, motioned Larry to the library.

"Larry, old man," said he, "I know I'm some grand gloomster and that certainly was a fool stunt of mine dropping the curtain from the other picture with the gang around but, Larry, I've a little apology for all that right here and I — er — it's something I think you'll understand and appreciate and — and I want you to know, Larry, that I can't pretend to express the good wishes that go with it." And Jerry held forth a miniature so exquisitely done that Larry stared. It was a fanciful little painting of Rose in the white robes of a nun, the winsome face beneath the band of white glorified by a look of high and holy consecration.

Larry held out his hand.

"Jerry, old man," he said, "I don't believe I ever realized how well you all understood."

"For the third time," came Bob's patient voice, "I must remind you that the ushers ought to be there."

Jerry fled.

\* \* \* \* \*

In an ivied old church on a quiet street the Doctor's lads ushered him into the Weston pew.

"Agnes, lass," he whispered, "would ye just look at my ushers! With their evenin' clothes and their spotless white gloves, ye winna find any handsomer, manlier lads in the world. Ye needn't smile, Agnes; 'tis true. And I'm pretty fine myself with my creases. Agnes, how long d'ye think it will be now before they'll be marchin' up the aisle? Larry must be here already, for just that moment Butts slipped in verra swift and quiet with his muslin muffin in his hand. . . . I did not suppose he'd come. . . . No, Agnes, I winna be quiet. Other folks whisper a bit. Why canna I too?"

Came the echo of the cathedral gong striking eight and the Doctor stirred again.

"Agnes," said he, "eight was the time. They're late already. . . . There comes Letty and Aunt Ann. . . . That will be June's signal for the weddin' march. Larry told me. . . . My! My! Isn't Ann mortal handsome

with her trailin' purplish satin. And, guid faith, Agnes, for once she has left her alpenstock at home. Deil take it, I wish Letty did not look so mortal sad. . . . Didn't I tell ye, Agnes? . . . *There goes the weddin' march!*"

And June, who had been softly improvising — for surely no other fingers must play the march for Mother Rose — opened the great diapason of the organ and flooded the quiet church with the deathless strains of the Wedding March.

"Marcia and Sonia and the twins!" whispered the Doctor in awe as the girls filed by. "'Tis a grand effect, Agnes, that blue with the dear lasses' sunny hair and their pretty eyes. . . . Hum . . . Carol and my Jeannie. . . . Agnes, I would have ye look at our beautiful Jeannie. And now, plague take it, it winna be so long before I myself will be leadin' my precious bairn to Bobbie. Oh, deil take it, a weddin' is a verra emotional sort of thing. Agnes, 'tis a bit of a job to be a father and mother and give your dear bairns away to others, eh, dear lass?"

"Roderick, please do be quiet!"

Through an aisle of maids and ushers came wee flower-laden Tavia, and then, with a rustle of heavy satin and the perfume of roses, Mother Rose upon the arm of Rodney.

The Doctor looked away.

"Oh, Agnes," he said, "I just canna look at my dear lass in her trailin' satin, bendin' her lovely head above the great bunch of roses. When I think of all the trouble she has seen and then look at her tranquil, beautiful face so sweet and cheery, it just makes such a lump in my throat that I canna stand it. See, Agnes, there come Larry and Bob to meet 'em. I canna see how the dear lad can be so calm. I would be crazy with excitement. Look at the fine color of him!"

Through the reverent quiet came the grave words that made the Doctor's beloved nephew and his Leddy Rose staunch partners for life and then the soft crush of satin as Rose knelt beside Larry to receive the benediction, so like her mother that Rodney turned away biting his lips and gulping, his color gone. And before the excited Doctor was fully aware that it was all over at last, that Larry was coming down the aisle with Rose upon his arm, the bridal procession was gone again and the guests were driving away to the wedding reception.

"Agnes," said the Doctor, "I fancied Rodney would take the chance to-night to be mortal important, but he's so white and quiet I feel verra sorry for him, verra sorry indeed."

And later, when the bridal carriage had driven away to the station, with Rose waving from the window and the Doctor's lads cheering themselves quite hoarse, the Doctor walked down the path to the gate where Rodney stood, staring pathetically after the carriage. Scanning the drooping figure of his host, with something of a shock the Doctor felt that Rodney was older and sadder to-night than he had ever seen him, that the hair upon his temples was growing white. The Doctor patted him kindly on the shoulder.

"Oh, Roderick," exclaimed Rodney desperately, "I have been thinking how Letty drove away so with me in the moonlight years ago to trouble and sickness and almost to death itself —"

"Man Rodney," said the Doctor bluntly, "'tis verra different. Larry will guard the lass as he would guard his life and he does not take himself over-seriously. There is great happiness ahead, I take it, for Mother Rose — and much for yourself and Letty as well if ye but keep your two feet solidly in the path to which ye have so bravely set them. For ye have guid stuff to work with, man, but ye had wrapped yourself in so many sinful wrappers of conceit and delusion that we had to peel 'em off one

by one to find ye. And now that we have disinterred the kernel, by unremittin' labor, please God, may we keep it alive!"

And the Doctor held out his hand.









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